



TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

Palmiro-Togliatti and Socialist-Communist Unity

THE DEEP PROBING by Italian Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti into the democratic roots of socialism has become a big factor in promoting Socialist-Communist unity, and not only in Italy.

Italy has long been far in advance on this because a mass Communist Party has operated under a united front alliance with a mass Socialist party, headed by Pietro Nenni. Of necessity, when you are in such an alliance you must respect the views of your partner even when you disagree with them.

Furthermore, the question of democracy has always been a point at issue between Socialists and Communists. So has the question of relations with the Soviet Union. Therefore the deliberations of the 20th congress of the Soviet C. P. played a part in causing some Socialists to reconsider their previous opposition to unity.

THIS QUESTION is aired in a page one editorial of the influential left wing Laborite publication in Britain, "The New Statesman and Nation." Its June 23 issue concludes, from Togliatti's stand and from similar developments in the world Communist movement, that Socialists must get together with Communists. The editorial takes sharp issue with right wing British Labor leaders, like chairman Gaitskell, who oppose negotiations and collaboration with Communists. The magazine's position is similar to G.D.H. Cole's brilliant appeal for unity.

The New Statesman quotes

Togliatti's declaration that "The Soviet model is not and cannot be obligatory any longer," and adds:

"Togliatti's statement has opened up a new phase in the history of Communism. Developing the criticism advanced by Nenni, he has now repudiated as 'un-Marxist' Khrushchev's attempt to fasten responsibility for the crimes of an epoch on one man, and he has called for a searching examination of the causes which made the Stalinist terror possible."

New Statesman believes: "For Togliatti, the condemnation of Stalin's excesses is over. The trial of Lenin's ideas has begun."

NEW STATESMAN overstates its case somewhat, it appears to me. Togliatti hasn't put Lenin's ideas "on trial." Rather, as a Marxist, (and Lenin was the greatest), Togliatti knows that no one, not even Lenin, said the last word on questions arising in different times and different places.

But that's another subject again. Here we're concerned with how important a position like Togliatti's is for advancing the cause of working class unity. And on this New Statesman makes some very important points including a telling criticism of those right wingers who oppose relations with the Communists.

"There's is a lesson here for the British Labor Party. The incident has shown the positive role which Socialists can play in breaking up the Communist monolith. But that role can be played only where Communists

and Socialists are on speaking terms. Nenni, despite the difficulties of the cold war, has always managed to keep the conversation going. The British Labor Party has not. Moreover, now that it has at last the opportunity to exert real influence on the Communist world, its leaders talk as if they were afraid to encourage the very changes for which Socialists have been hoping. There was the disastrous dinner-party (where the right wing Labor leader squabbled with Khrushchev, J. C.). There was the ill-conceived 'nothing in common' resolution of the Socialist International. (Which said Socialists and Communists have nothing in common and was criticized by G.D.H. Cole, J. C.) There has been a whole series of 'cold war' speeches by Gaitskell."

New Statesman asks:

"Why the mental paralysis among Labor leaders? What are they afraid of? Does Mr. Gaitskell still believe that the Russians are contemplating a military aggression?"

And it answers:

"Perhaps the explanation is that for 10 years Labor thinking has been imprisoned in the straitjacket created by the American alliance, and bipartisan foreign policy. These were the West's reaction to a supposed military threat. Once that straitjacket is removed, the consequence will, of necessity, be unpredictable. Is Mr. Gaitskell, like Mr. Khrushchev, worried by what might happen when the flood-gates opened?"

What various leaders are afraid of time will tell—but one thing is definite now—socialist-communist party unity has been furthered by Togliatti's stand.