

British Communists Cite Soviet Explanations of Stalin Cult

In the third installment of the British Communist delegation's report on the Soviet Union, just received here, the delegation tackles the problem: "How could the crimes of Stalin and Beria arise in a socialist society?"

The report says that, in conversations with Soviet spokesmen, "the invariable answer was that these things did not arise from the essence of socialist society but from certain historical circumstances which arose in the course of the development of socialism in the Soviet Union. It was argued that these circumstances have now passed."

The members of the British C.P. delegation, headed by J. R. Campbell, say they argued that the crimes and repressions "arose within the socialist system and that, therefore, it was impossible to argue that they had nothing to do with the socialist system."

In reply to this, the editors of the Soviet theoretical magazine "Communist" said, "The violation of inner-Party democracy was not an over-all affair." They noted that "in the worst years of the Stalin regime" local organizations of the Party continued to meet "even though the Central Committee of the party was not meeting."

The Soviet Communists also pointed out that the carrying through of the first and second five-year plans, as well as the war, "involved a high degree of centralization."

"Stalin, because of the prestige he had gained," the Communist editors said, "in the inner-Party struggle against the Trotskyists and the right wing opportunists, acquired an immense prestige in the Party. Despite the hardships there were great achievements in the sphere of industrialization and collectivization which were evident to everyone. The victories of socialist construction became attached to the name of Stalin. As his authority grew, his feeling of self-sufficiency increased and he began to ignore the opinions of others more and more."

The report continues: "In this period members of the Political Bureau stated their opinions but could not carry their opposition through to the end. It was not a matter of personal courage. The people would not have understood, let alone supported, their statements against Stalin."

Stalin apparently worked for the triumph of communism, the editors told the British delegation and added:

"Stalin accused innocent people of being 'enemies of the people.'"

This was a grievous abuse, but it should never be forgotten that there were real enemies of the people. Throughout the whole period the imperialist powers kept sending their agents into the Soviet Union."

In the Academy of Science the British delegation were told there were many branches of science which were not interfered with and work proceeded normally. However, they also found that "on some scientific themes, on which Stalin or some leading Party body had made a pronouncement . . . the possibility of carrying out critical scientific work was severely restricted."

"For ten years," the report states, "it was impossible to carry out genuinely scientific work in the field of genetics."

"Asked whether scientists had discussed these questions among themselves, the comrades stated that it was clear that during the latter part of Stalin's life something was wrong. This was clear without discussion. There was restriction of the scientists' freedom to discuss certain questions, they knew it and had to put up with it."

The delegation asked members of the Soviet Supreme Court: "What was the judiciary doing during the period of the 'cult of the individual,' when many viola-

tions of socialist legality occurred?" "The general answer was that most of the cases in which there were violations of socialist legality did not go through the ordinary courts at all, but were dealt with by a body originally set up to deal with the counter-revolution. This body was known as the 'Special Conference.'

"It was set up in 1934 after the assassination of Kirov, to deal with authentic counter-revolutionaries, but it had been perverted by Stalin and was used against innocent people whom he considered to be 'enemies of the people.'

"Later Beria acquired a very great influence over Stalin and was able, using this Conference, to repress anyone who sought to criticize these methods in public."

Asked what was being done to eliminate the consequences of the Stalin cult, the delegation was told of the restoration of collective leadership at all levels. There were also changes in the law so that a person accused of a serious crime has to be presented with the charges within two weeks. Confession by itself can no longer be accepted as proof of guilt.

"There is a new law being drafted," they were told, "which will permit the defense lawyer to be brought in at the stage when the case is still under investigation."

In principle, the judges agreed that a socialist state should work toward the abolition of capital punishment. In the meantime, they said, its application "was being more and more limited."

The delegation reported, in conclusion, "that the causes of the emergence of the personal power of Stalin require deeper study than they have been given—a study that is, in the main, incumbent on our Soviet comrades. While agreeing broadly with the estimates of the June resolutions of the CPSU, consider it urgent that there should be a more fundamental Marxist-Leninist analysis."

"We believe," the report says, "that Stalin acquired his immense prestige not only on account of his genuine achievements in leadership but on account of a 'systematic build-up,' in the press, by the propaganda organs of the Party and by other devices. These practices have now been completely abandoned."

Finally the delegation report says:

"The necessity of the deputies to all Soviets keeping in constant and close touch with their constituents and paying more attention to the demands and complaints of their constituents was everywhere emphasized."