

All-Party Debate Sounds Off As Chinese Criticize Regime

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PEKING

LET'S put it this way: Suppose the Republican Party publically invited the Democrats, the Socialists, the Communists, as well as any and all social, fraternal, academic and scientific organizations and institutions to state their beefs against the administration. Suppose this were done — naming names, dates and places—and it was all published in the nation's leading newspapers, front-page, for several weeks running.

Of course this is sheer fantasy for America today, but if you can imagine it, that is roughly the equivalent of what is going on in China right now.

It began a couple of weeks ago with a statement issued by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party saying, in substance, the following: We've kicked the foreign imperialists and their Chinese flunkies off the mainland, we've given land to the tillers, we've socialized agriculture, industry and commerce. We've licked our class enemies — now we can concentrate on some of the practices among ourselves that are throwing grit in the wheels of progress. Since it's all in the family we shouldn't blow up a storm about it; rather, we should use an approach of soft rains and gentle breezes." But we have to be firm about our own faults—especially those of our leaders, and even more especially those of leaders who are Communists.

The statement went on to assert that the most serious failings of Party leaders are bureaucracy, subjectivism and sectarianism, and call for a thorough-going rectification campaign within the Party. It said that criticism from non-Communists would be more than welcome.

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SINCE THEN, the response among the general public has been quite astonishing. All over China—in government organizations, in schools, associations, societies —

people have been meeting, in small groups and large, and criticizing Communists and Communist Party units.

These criticisms are being prominently featured in the press; they are broadcast over the radio; magazines carry articles about them. They include a wide variety of complaints—some profound, some silly.

A number of government officials, who are members of other political parties, assert that their authority is often only nominal, that the Communist Party actually runs their particular unit. They agree that the Communist Party, as the representative of China's working class, should lead the country, but they think this leadership should be exercised more indirectly. They suggest that a more clear-cut distinction be made between the role of the Communist Party and the function of government organizations.

Others have accused the CP of favoritism. Examples are cited of young Communists getting promotions over the heads of older and more experienced men. It is also alleged that in making up delegations for visits abroad, preference has usually been given to Party members.

A leader of the Democratic League has protested that the decision to introduce the alphabet into China, to ultimately replace the ideographs presently in use, was undemocratic. He said the PPCC (China's national advisory council) was presented with a draft alphabet in regard to which they were invited to make modifications, but they were never asked whether they approved having an alphabet in the first place.

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VARIOUS intellectuals, including a number in academic and scientific fields, complained that they have been holding the wrong jobs for years. Thus, they said, is partly because some Party leaders have tended to keep them at arm's length, and thus never got to know them. Partly, it is due to the fact

that personnel departments are staffed exclusively with Communists, some of whom are very young indeed. ("Babies!" was how a Peking Normal College professor described them.) These youngsters have very little understanding of the jobs involved or the qualifications needed.

One former capitalist, now working in a big state-private enterprise, has recommended that the government partner leave all problems of management to men like him—a private partner. This was promptly opposed by other former industrialists. They said not only did the government representative smooth relations between them and the workers—he even helped untangle the snarls between the and other ex-capitalist partners.

These are just a few random samples of the opinions being put forward. Although this phase of the campaign is expected to last for some time, a number of the mistakes pointed out have already been corrected. For instance, small capitalists now working in government organizations, but still drawing income on their assets taken over by the government, will nevertheless be entitled to free medical care and unemployment insurance like other workers. Fellowships to universities abroad will be granted on the basis of competitive exams open to all graduates, regardless of political affiliation.

No time limit has been placed on the discussion. Communist Party rank and file have only just begun to sound off.

AFTER everyone has had a chance to speak his mind, the CP branches and organizations will carefully examine all the criticisms and analyze the faults that have been revealed. Reports on what action the Party will take—and why—will then be made public.

Obviously, no administration would stick its neck out as the Chinese CP has done unless it were very sure of the backing of the people. The spirit in which criticisms are being voiced would seem to fully justify this confidence.