

British Reds Assail Leader

By DREW MIDDLETON

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LONDON, March 28 — Outspoken criticism of its leader's past subservience to Stalinism has raised the question of the future leadership of the British Communist party.

The British Communists will hold their annual conference this week-end. A spate of letters in *The Daily Worker* criticizing its leadership is interpreted by observers as a preliminary to the unseating of Harry Pollitt, the party secretary.

Mr. Pollitt, who has held the post since 1929, is apparently undismayed. His position is that the primary job of the party is to help oust the Conservative Government and elect a Labor Government.

This does not mean, Labor politicians said, that Mr. Pollitt likes them any better than he does Prime Minister Eden and his Cabinet. But it is part of the present Communist tactics to support the Labor party, which the Communists think they can influence through their position in some important trade unions.

Mr. Pollitt's position is definitely endangered, in the opinion

of political observers. His leadership has been subjected to the sort of critical examination that usually heralds demotion.

Mr. Pollitt led his party through the reversals of policy following signature of the Russian-German pact of 1939 and the Soviet decision to jettison the wartime alliance with Britain and attack the Labor Government of 1945.

He is attacked now because he failed to understand Stalin's errors or, if he did understand them, to tell the party about them. The rank and file of the British Communist party has always retained vestiges of independence, which made it unpopular in Moscow, and this faint feeling for self-rule could be behind the present criticisms.

One writer accused Mr. Pollitt of "dismay and confusion," which he called "fruits of moral cowardice."

The British Communists are in contact and competition with the powerful, well-informed Labor movement. A number of letters emphasized difficulties that party members encountered in defending Stalinism to Labor critics.

A sense of solidarity carried to "grotesque, preposterous lengths" led to the "condoning of events that were obviously evil," one letter said.

Mr. Pollitt took his time in acknowledging Stalin's errors. Not until last Saturday did he echo Nikita S. Khrushchev, Soviet Communist party chief, and admit that Stalin had "made serious mistakes in connection with agricultural policy, ignored warnings about Hitler's invasion plans and, later, adopted wrong policies in relation to Yugoslavia."