

# THE PRESS AND THE CONVENTION

By ALAN MAX

PRESS REACTIONS to the recent Communist Party convention seem to be of three types.

First, there is the liberal New York Post which maintains that it is "absurd" to pretend that nothing really happened at the convention; that it is "madness" to "minimize the news" of the party's independence.



Second, a number of papers consider it their duty to convince their readers that the news stories carried by these same papers on the convention didn't really tell the truth and that nothing new occurred.

The Providence (R.I.) Journal wants its readers to know for example that "the U. S. Reds explicitly retained their devotion" to the "American class struggle." Now, what do

you know!

The paper goes on to proclaim that the "American people remain unconvinced that this performance means any real change in the status of the U.S. Communist Party" in its relations with Moscow. If the people are unconvinced, why the need for so many editorials to unconvince them?

Or Newsday (Long Island N.Y.) says that by making changes, "the Communists not only continue to exist but make themselves stronger. They will be tougher to deal with because they will be shifting their feet to meet changing situations in this country. The wolf has decided to put on sheep's clothing. Let none be fooled by this false face of independence."

Likewise, the Wall St. Journal asks, if you wanted to pretend that you were independent, "what would you do?" And the answer the W.S.J. gives is that you would do exactly what the convention did. Presumably, if you sincerely wanted to be independent, you would do the

opposite.

WHICH BRINGS us to a third set of reactions. This is a grudging admission that something quite big happened at convention but an insistence that the Communist Party still must pass various "tests."

The New York Times, for example, says the Party must now abandon the concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Communists, by the way, voted to re-examine this concept in the light of American conditions—what this re-examination will result in I do not know, but I doubt whether it will make the Times happy because it will not be done with that in mind. It is not enough, says the Times, to interpret scientific socialism independently, the Communists must renounce it altogether. I would say there is as much chance of that happening as there is of the Times renouncing capitalism.

Another in the group that proposes further "tests" for the Communists is Roscoe Drum-

mond, Washington columnist of the New York Herald Tribune. He writes that "it would be short-sighted as well as inaccurate to say that the Communist Party" can never free itself from what he calls "Moscow control." But he "wouldn't accept the Communist Party's own say-so that the event has already taken place." He says the party has not yet become independent, that it has "only 'resolved' that it might do so." (He ignores the independent position which the party took at the time of the events in Poland and Hungary—a position which, incidentally, was independent of the position of the Herald-Tribune too.)

ONE THING is evident from all the press comments on the Communist convention—the party evidently is still very much alive.

I must add, however, how annoying I find these "tests" which someone is always proposing for the Communists. I agree some "tests" are in order

at this point—but of quite another kind.

To chart an effective American path to socialism, does, in fact, call for independence of judgment. But let me ask of the New York Times and of Roscoe Drummond in the H-T: are the Smith Act arrests and the McCarran Act prosecutions and all the other forms of McCarthyite repression calculated to produce "independent thinking?"

Are prison sentences for books, thoughts and discussion outlines the way to achieve independent judgment? Is thought-control the way to free-thinking?

Let those newspapers which either deny that the Communists are independent or who admit they are but say not sufficiently so, pass this test—let them prove THEIR concern for independence for the Communists by coming out squarely against the Smith and McCarran Act prosecutions and other police-state type of repression calculated to destroy all freedom of judgment.