

# A Reply to Comrade Healey

By James E. Jackson

ONE MIGHT HAVE expected that a member of the National Committee would have exhibited a greater sense of responsibility and not have insisted upon the publication in *Political Affairs*, the official organ of the National Committee, of an article representative of a line that was rejected by majority vote of that body in its meeting of February, 1958.\* As a member responsible to the National Committee, her clear obligation is to carry out the policies adopted by that Committee. She may disagree with that majority decision, but her first obligation as a member of the Committee, is to seek to implement it.

What does Comrade Healey contend for in her article (which, incidentally, has no relevance to its title, "On the Status of the Party")? She contends for a Party of multiple ideologies in which agnosticism is enshrined as a primary virtue. "Our Party must be able to contain within it people with divergent points of view," Comrade Healey declares. "To demand doctrinal unity or pur-

ity would be to guarantee either its disintegration or its vegetation." She invokes the words of great bourgeois libertarians—Milton, Jefferson, Mill—in defense of the equal rights of any system of ideas to be "let loose to play" against Marxism-Leninism within the Party.

No Marxist Party can hope to maintain its essential character if it abjures the struggle to secure and perfect its ideology. No Marxist Party can realize and maintain effective organizational unity save on the foundation of united allegiance to a single, common ideology—Marxism-Leninism. We want the Communist Party to get into the marketplace of ideas in the present bourgeois society; we do not want to convert the Party into an ideological marketplace—in which case it becomes not a Communist Party, but a debating society.

Within this framework there is, of course, the necessity for debate and there may well be divergence of views among Marxists. But this is clearly not what Comrade Healey is talking about. For she waxes particularly indignant at Comrade Eugene Dennis who had the temer-

\* The main political resolution adopted at the meeting was published in our March issue; in the same issue appeared the article by Comrade Healey.—*Editor*.

ity to remind the National Committee that Marxism, being the most advanced social science known to man, like a science must, also has its base of laws and principles which are universally valid concepts. And that no Marxist deserving of the name can deny this fact.

Comrade Dennis enumerated an illustrative number of universally valid principles which constitute the pillars of the social science and philosophical world view of Marxism-Leninism. (See p. 7 of *Party Affairs*, Dec. 1957). It is no more possible to be a Marxist and not subscribe to its general principles than it is possible to be a chemist and not accept the particular general laws and disciplines which are embodied in that branch of science. But Comrade Healey endeavors to mask her agnosticism, her denial that Marxism has a body of scientific general principles and laws for the use of the working class in "changing the world," by resorting to misrepresentation. This she does by asserting that Dennis attributes the existence of universal laws and principles of Marxism to the pronouncements and authority of foreign Marxists and not to the science itself!

But what has the acceptance of the principles of a science (if Marxism had no universal laws and principles it would not be a science!) got to do with the question of a critical attitude toward "specific concepts projected by our comrades in the socialist countries"?

This approach of Comrade Healey would convert the cultivation of a critical attitude toward the theoretical projections and experiences of our comrades abroad into a protective shield for those who want to strike at the vitals of Marxist-Leninist ideology itself.

Indeed, Comrade Healey repeatedly resorts to sophistry and direct misrepresentation in making her case against certain comrades in the leadership to whom she attributes malevolent designs against the decisions of the 16th Convention. For example, she indicts Comrade James Allen for allegedly foisting upon the Party a "distorted, one-sided approach toward the Soviet Union." She assails Allen's report on the international situation (*P.A.*, Dec. 1957) as failing to "equip us to understand the role of the Soviet Union in the Middle East"; her proof is the simple assertion that it is guilty of reflecting an approach and language common to the Marxists "before the 20th Congress and 16th National Convention." For this sweeping characterization, she offers not one bit of documentation.

Comrade Healey doesn't tell us what that approach and language is! Could it be a partisan *class approach*, an international Leninist approach to an exposition of "the role of the S.U. in the Middle East"? Could it be that it was presented in the positive language appropriate to the great role the peace policy of the Soviet Union played in allay-

ing the mounting tensions and frustrating the war machinations of imperialism in that area? What is it really that Comrade Healey finds so objectionable in Comrade Allen's article? In her article she gives us clues to her real complaint through recourse to an elliptical method of posing a number of questions which beg their own inference. The inference is that Comrade Healey wanted Allen to describe the role of the socialist Soviet Union in the Middle East as a gambit in big nation power politics, on the same low level with the imperialist maneuvering of capitalist powers like the U.S., France and England. This is precisely the *new "approach and language"* for our Party to adopt toward the Soviet Union that Comrade Healey calls for. And if this "critical" approach conflicts with the true facts and reality of the role of the Soviet Union in foreign affairs, in the service of world peace and independence, sovereignty and freedom of colonial nations, then what of it; by the grace of the 16th Convention we are obliged to criticize the policies of the Soviet Union! Comrade Healey takes pains not even to plant a small subtle clue for her readers to learn the fact that she (Dorothy Healey) was one of the members present at the Executive Board meeting of the National Committee that *unanimously adopted* the report of Comrade James Allen. Nor does she offer any explanation as to why she then voted for a report which

she now attacks as being basically wrong.

In like fashion she seeks to discredit my report on the South (*P.A.*, Dec. 1957, "The South's New Challenge") which the National Committee adopted without a single vote of opposition. Comrade Healey also voted for this report. Because the report did not endorse her remarkable discovery of "what is new" in the Negro question, she charges that I presented to the Party a reformist document and that I am therefore really peddling opportunism while avowedly on the "Left" in the inner-Party struggle. Comrade Healey asserts that what is new in the Negro people's movement is "the fusion of the traditional cultural expression of the Negro people (traditions and institutions of the Church) with the modified ideology of Thoreau and Gandhi."

But the inoculation of the Negro people's "traditions and institutions of the Church" with generous injections of Gandhi and Thoreau's ideas can hardly describe what is new in either the ideological changes or material developments in the Negro people's movement. The explanation for such changes as have occurred in the programs and tactics and ideology of the leadership of the Negro people's organizations, must be sought first of all in the changes that have taken place in the material status of the Negro people. It must be sought in the fact that the Negro people (both in the coun-

try as a whole and in the South) are today in great majority an urban working people. The necessities of city life demand a speeded-up tempo of struggle against the whole pattern of Jim Crow restrictions and compels a more organized mass struggle. The necessity for a home to live in compels a militant struggle against the color bar in housing. The necessity to earn a living makes urgent an active fight against injustice in the area of jobs, etc., etc. The "new" concentration of the great majority of Negroes in the towns and city facilitates organization and concerted action. "The story of Montgomery," said the Rev. M. L. King, "is the story of 50,000 Negroes tired of injustice and exploitation who have fashioned themselves into an organized conscious power serving the battering rams of historical necessity. . . . We are all in this together: ministers, professional people and the masses." (*The Story of Montgomery*, Baptist Affairs Pamphlet, Nashville, Tenn.)

But, if Comrade Healey means the new thing in the ideology of the Negro people's movement is the passive resistance, "turn the other cheek" notions of a Thoreau or Gandhi, she misses the main thing in the great work of these historic personages, as well as the "new thing" in the modern Negro people's movement. The new thing is *mass resistance* to segregation and discrimination, which is the opposite of passive acquiescence or moderation

or gradualism. The Rev. King expressed this new feature in the present Negro movement's ideology as follows: "We must be willing to stand up courageously against the evils of segregation wherever we find it. Now, I must confess this means suffering and sacrifice. It might mean going to jail, but if such be the case, we must be willing to fill up the jail houses of the South. It might even mean physical death. But if physical death is the price that some must pay to free our children from a permanent life of psychological death, then nothing could be more honorable."

As you see from the above, the key word in the "new" stream of consciousness in the ideology of the Negro people's leaders, including the Rev. King, is that of *resistance*—resistance to the point of great personal sacrifice on the part of leaders and masses.

Whatever additional questions the Report on the South might well have covered, the approach of Comrade Healey on this subject would hardly have added to its merit.

Probably the key to Comrade Healey's disorientation is revealed in her belief that:

The history of working-class parties documents the dialectical contradiction always present: how to participate in daily mass struggles while advancing the struggle for socialism. Communist Parties must always deal with two dangers: *abandoning the mass character of the Party*, or *abandoning its*

*final aim*—either falling into reformism or sectarianism.

But there is no such "dialectical contradiction." On the contrary, the Communist Party represents the unity of the present and the future, the link between the class struggles of today and the socialist goal. It is the posing of such a false dichotomy as Comrade Healey sees that is the source of the confusion which pervades her entire article, and would make struggle against either revisionism or sectarianism ineffective.

Comrade Healey wrongly sees in the efforts of the Party to work in behalf of the immediate needs of the masses, the source of revisionism and

opportunism. And as a corollary, she sees the source of sectarianism in the struggle for the socialist goal. The truth is that both sectarianism and revisionism, opportunism and adventurism basically have their source in, and are reflections of, the influences and pressures of imperialism upon our class and Party.

The clear implication is that one must choose between the cause of the immediate demands of the masses, or the cause of Socialism. But Marxism denies any such conflict of interests. It holds that the struggle to satisfy immediate needs and the struggle for ultimate goals are not contradictions, but rather are complementary.

#### FOUR YEARS LATE

"Being a hothouse of secrecy, the Central Intelligence Agency breeds a jungle of rumor and speculation about itself. It is universally suspected of being a global mischief-maker. *It has been established, for example, that the agency was behind Guatemala's 1954 revolution against the Americas' first Communist regime.* On this evidence, it is generally assumed that its agents are busy muddying waters in other sensitive areas."

*The New York Times Magazine*, March 16, 1958, p. 96.