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CONDEMN NO COMMUNIST UNHEARD ---
And That Includes Hill!!

"Because an objective discussion of the many points of criticism made of, and by, Comrade Hoxha and the Albanian Party of Labour has not yet taken place, we cannot, as many Parties have done, condemn Comrade Hoxha and the leadership of the Albanian Party of Labour as non-Marxian."

This statement by the Political Committee of the Communist Party of New Zealand (see full article, this issue) must win the agreement of every Communist who believes in democratic centralism.

It asserts a principle vital to any Leninist organisation: that dissenting views must not be silenced, that the membership must have a genuine opportunity to consider them.

We do not mean that the minority on every tactical question discussed at Central Committee level should thereupon launch a Party-wide discussion to reverse the decision. Nor do we mean that, even on basic political questions, there should be permanent discussion throughout the Party, with the current minority attempting to have the latest decisions reversed. Obviously this would destroy the Party's fighting ability as a centralist organisation.

What we are talking about is the conduct of the process by which the Party arrives at majority decisions on fundamental questions of policy (which then become binding on the minority, who of course reserve their opinions if not convinced, and carry out the decisions in practice). It is in this process of working out a policy that it is essential for all viewpoints to be made available to the membership.

Otherwise, they have no grounds for an informed decision; they are turned into a rubber stamp, "endorsing" willy-nilly the policy of the top-level winners of the moment. For who could support the minority's policy, which must obviously appear completely wrong and dangerous -- when the membership hear only its opponents' version of it!

Should Lenin Have Been "Silenced"?

It is not considerations of "abstract democracy" that makes this principle vital. It is the simple fact that no leadership can always be right, and that the silencing of minority viewpoints must inevitably lead to serious political errors, and even disasters for the working class.

When Lenin proposed the aim of a seizure of power, on his return to Russia in April, 1917, he found the Central Committee against him almost to a man. But, because the Bolshevik Party was a democratic centralist party, he had the right to circulate his minority views to the Party membership. He exercised this right and received such support that the Party's

line was changed.

Under the regime introduced in Stalin's time, which replaced democratic centralism by "bureaucratic centralism", Lenin would have had to keep silent, or risk expulsion; the membership would not have heard the case for a seizure of power put competently by a leading cadre; and it is quite possible that the working class would have failed to make its greatest historical achievement, the October Revolution.

The recent "resignation" of Ted Hill from his positions as Victorian State Secretary and Secretariat member is typical of this "silencing" process. What are his views, and those of the minority on the C.C. who would not endorse the condemnation of Albania? Why must they be kept from the membership?

In asking these questions, we are far from endorsing either these views or the policies and practice of the Albanian Party of Labour. We know, for example, that the allegation of "gangster methods" against Hoxha's bureaucratic clique is correct; that they have bitterly opposed the "liberalising" measures which have somewhat alleviated the rigours of bureaucratic rule in the Soviet Union. But we are also aware of pointed criticisms by Albania (and China) of Khrushchev's "revisionism", of the policy which holds back the class struggle in the interests (often more fancied than real) of diplomatic negotiation with imperialism. We know that the record contains evidence to support this criticism also.

We do not agree that such basic differences "should not be aired". Certainly Lenin never dreamt of hushing up vital controversies, of having the membership confronted with only one political viewpoint to "endorse". Khrushchev is to be criticised, not for airing differences, but precisely for not airing them; he concealed the Chinese and Albanian criticisms, attacked them on a secondary point where they were weakest, and asked for a blanket condemnation. These are the "smart tactics" of Tammany Hall and capitalist "machine politics"; they bear little resemblance to the methods of Lenin or Leninism, and are designed precisely to keep the rank and file out of the real discussion.

For Serious Discussion, Not "Endorsement"!

In our last issue we listed the various distinct trends in the world Communist Parties, with our critical appraisal of each. It is only necessary to think of the conflicting positions adopted by the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union, China and Yugoslavia, for instance -- each holding State power -- to see that the phoney "unity" of the past, got by silencing the opposition (often with a bullet), can never be enforced again. Hill may be silenced; Albanian and Yugoslav publications in English reach a few Communists, however, and how on earth can China be forced to hold its tongue?

Unity of the world Communist movement can be reached now in only one way: the Leninist way. This means a genuine discussion throughout the Parties on the main political issues:

- +† The "peaceful co-existence" policy and its real meaning for the class struggle.
- ++ The goal of revolutionaries in the colonial and semi-colonial countries: alliance with the "progressive bourgeoisie" to form a "national democracy", or socialist revolution and a workers' state?
- ++ "Parliamentary Roads to Socialism", or the mobilisation of the working class for revolution?
- ++ Retention of the rigid forms of bureaucratic rule in the Workers' States or liberalisation of them, or their replacement by workers' democracy?

These are some of the questions at issue. The future of humanity depends vitally on their correct solution by working class leaders. Their settlement demands, not rubber-stamp "endorsement" meetings, but a serious discussion in which all trends are heard.