

national. What possible work can an organisation representing miners the world over do with the paltry finances available? The miners of South Wales, and in fact, the whole country, have at long last realised the need for unity in the miners' ranks. The South Wales miners have called for better collaboration between the Miners' International and the W.F.T.U.

The British miners have carried a resolution calling for the exploration of the possibility of re-establishing contact between the Soviet and British miners.

Unity at home is extremely important in these days, but unity abroad is equally important. The bans and restrictions that prevail in the working class movement of this country merely aggravate this problem. In the working class movement we have men of all shades of Socialist opinion. They are an integral part of the British trade union movement irrespective of their hue; they are exploited in the same way by their employers. To obtain for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their labours is still our aim.

The *Economist* is exceedingly worried at the militant trends in the British trade union movement. During the war and the immediate post-war years when the British workers adopted a policy of restraint, the *Economist* was loud in its praise; the leaders of the movement were considered to be statesmen and to be behaving in a statesmanlike manner. Now, however, when the industries are producing goods in greater quantities than effective demand can consume, workers are asked to accept a standstill in their wages whilst the cost of living is continually soaring. A leadership that challenges this position is considered to be disruptive and pursuing policies against the economy of this country. It is alleged that the national budget cannot be balanced if such policies are pursued, and that the nation will be unable to pay its way.

However, little does the *Economist* consider as to whether a worker is able to balance his budget. The suggestion (of the *Economist*) that a Royal Commission should examine the work of the trade union movement is no solution to the problems of the day. To endeavour to curb the activities of the trade union movement will not be tolerated these days. Tory Governments and their representatives cannot offer any lessons in democracy to the trade union movement.

Abe Moffatt wrote truly when he said that it was never more necessary for the trade union movement to stand united. That unity must know no national or party limits. It must be world-wide, if the workers are to achieve the full fruits of their labour.

## Discussion on Marxism and Morals

### On Marxism and Morals

*M. Levitas*

IT appears from Comrade Burgher's contribution to this discussion that some of us "can easily become obsessed with what look to us like defections from socialist morality in those places where the fight to establish socialism is actually going on". We should look more closely apparently and (possibly if we school ourselves sufficiently) those ideals, which we believed in fact to have been in process of realisation, but which we now know to have been in some measure departed from, will most certainly be, though not immediately, "identifiable".

The allusion here is obvious and it seems to underline the need for the discussion on Marxism and morals opened up by Comrade Lewis. Indeed, it makes very clear the need for a recognition that there are certain principles involving a moral factor which should guide a Marxist in his decisions. That moral factor must be: what aim should he set himself in view of the possibilities inherent in a given situation? The concluding paragraph in Comrade Burgher's contribution implies that there were no departures from socialist morality in the countries where Socialism is being built. And the moral issue here is that, since departure may be taken as a matter of fact, our comrade evidently experiences a need to "explain" my inadequate perception (though I claim to be a Communist and not "an intellectual of the Left") instead of looking facts in the face and working out the lessons. One of these lessons surely is that a socialist morality does not *automatically* grow on to a socialist economy just because a socialist society has a "higher" morality than has a capitalist society; another lesson must be that the thoughts of even the best of our leaders must never be taken as a substitute for our own thinking just because their leadership derives from the fact that they *generally* think more clearly.

#### Ideals and "Ends"

In any case, it can hardly be true that the ideals of socialists (also engaged in "the fight to establish Socialism") living and working under capitalism are as unrelated to reality as is made out in describing them as "ideals in theory, ideals at the stage of mere Utopian projection". These ideals are in fact the "ends" which crop up in the "means-end" controversy. They are already related to reality in the content of the class

struggle under capitalism. They are conceived of in the course of a struggle against the values postulated by capitalism. The ideals of common ownership, real democracy, internationalism, an end to anti-Semitism, the abolition of colonialism, and peace, are all concepts springing from the struggle against monopoly capitalism, capitalist power, chauvinism, the ghetto and gas-chamber, imperialism and war. The Marxist claims that these ideals are *realisable*, because the forces exist for their realisation, and to the extent the struggle is waged to realise them.

Thus, on the subject of means-end, Comrade Lewis's formulation is hardly adequate when he writes that Marxists ". . . evaluate means not by absolute standards but by consequences". It would appear, on a Marxist view, that certain alternative patterns of consequences are possible outcomes of a given set of circumstances (or forces). Communists strive to direct those forces to accomplish consequences already inherent in them. The consequences are already *somewhat* shaped by their means, and those means alter in the course of efforts to achieve inherently possible consequences; e.g. a works committee as a means of fighting for a wage increase or against redundancy must undergo change in the course of doing so.

There is, of course, a factor of evaluation. A Communist in a capitalist factory or Communists at the head of a socialist state may conceivably be tempted to condone or "cash in on" anti-Semitic or chauvinist prejudices held by workers in order to become popular as a means of winning or consolidating influence in order to further the victory of Socialism. This I believe would be a particular case of opportunism. Adherence to socialist morality would call for resistance to such temptation, and in the last analysis such opportunism must of course be inimical to the victory of Socialism.

The most important agents in the complex of class struggles nowadays are the political parties: some striving for a classless society; others straining to maintain the supremacy of an exploiting class. The first type of party is the party of the working class, and that party can itself be a poor or an efficient means to its end; and its poverty or efficiency will depend on (among other things) the conviction that its end is possible of achievement without departures from its values, from its morality. The second type of party is that whose ends include the maintenance of a system which can still be construed as efficient when unemployment exists, and whose means for the defence of its system postulates the perpetual danger (at least) of war with nuclear weapons.

In the light of the above argument it can be said that there are two moralities in conflict:

(a) capitalist morality, (b) socialist morality. Comrade Lewis has well answered the demand by certain philosophers that we furnish "a reason, a moral ground other than the fact it is *our* interest we are concerned with" as proof of the superiority of socialist objectives. The class morality, he says, of the working class is far more than a class morality because through its victory society as a whole benefits. This position has support from Engels: ". . . that morality which contains the maximum of durable elements is the one which, in the present, represents the overthrow of the present, represents the future: that is the proletarian (morality)."

All systems of morality have in common that they represent "stages of the same historical development" (Engels); what is peculiar to a higher morality is that its elements—its laws and sanctions—fit the future and its driving force is that class whose interests promote those laws and sanctions.

### Socialist Morality

But the laws and sanctions must be *actively* promoted, and a crucial question for socialists at the present time is: how may socialist laws and sanctions be formulated, enacted and made operative? This question has not been and will not be allowed to become a matter of *concern* only for our comrades in the socialist countries. The effectiveness of socialist morality, its mode of operation, its content in practice as well as its *formal declaration* are before the eyes of the people in capitalist countries in continual contrast with the morality of capitalism. And the salient point in this contrast can only be: to what extent does a socialist country abolish an imposition, satisfy a need, or sustain an ideal concerning the working class under capitalism?

The laws and sanctions must be actively promoted because the emergence of a socialist morality upon a socialist economy, or from a Communist government, is as little (or as much) automatically certain as is a revolution from a revolutionary situation.

For this reason it seems to me that an enquiry into the nature of morality and its grounds is insufficient nowadays, especially as on its own it shirks the content and therefore the contrasts, strengths and weaknesses of the contending systems. It is also insufficient because on its own it does not provide the standards by which the class conscious (and the socially conscious in socialist countries) may estimate their leaders.

Nevertheless the enquiry is necessary, and Comrade Lewis's article gives a firm outline of the nature and sources of morality.

### Duties and Rights

One difficulty exists for me in Comrade Lewis's article: that is, his first ground of obligation. This seems to be, for him, personal—individual. "And here we have . . . the first kind of *obligation*. A man has a duty to himself. . . . A man has the *right* to these things" (the things satisfying his desires). The objection is that "right" can only be considered an obligation in the sense that the individual's group recognises his claim and its duty to grant it. This does not seem to be an obligation from the point of view of the individual. "Right" constitutes a claim by an individual upon his group; "duty" constitutes a claim by his group upon the individual. On this view a man cannot have a "duty to himself": he merely exercises his claims upon his group—an action having special meaning if at some time he has forgone those recognised claims. It seems mistaken to search for a simpler unit than society itself even for a definition of "obligation"—just as mistaken as Comrade Lewis shows it to be to ground morality in anything other than social experience. This difficulty inheres again in the sentence: "This means that the obligation to restrain our natural impulses and forgo our legitimate desires arises from social experience". It is a little difficult to think of impulses which do not contain in them elements of social influence; and desires may only be legitimate by reference to the group.

## The Moral Law

John Shaw

I FEEL grateful to Dr. Lewis for what is after all a belated treatment of a most important problem, but I cannot feel that the handling is adequate to the issues involved, nor can I see how Dr. Lewis justifies the sweeping assertion on page 59 (Conclusions), "We thus see that the difficulties and objections concerning Marxist ethics are all answered."

In the first place I should expect the article to draw a clear distinction (which to my mind it nowhere does) between Marxist ethics under capitalism and those of at any rate a socialist society. What we are primarily concerned with in dealing with honest criticism of Marxist ethics (or at least of Communist morality) is our conduct and attitude to moral values in the course of the struggle to achieve working class power. I think it is not unfair to say that many Communists believe or appear to believe that under these conditions any action is morally justifiable which

helps in the working class struggle or can be said to further the fight against capitalism. Though Dr. Lewis does not appear to accept this, his words seem to me to involve confusion if not contradiction, if you examine the statement on pages 58 and 59 beginning, "Since they can only fulfil their needs by the overthrow of capitalism . . . and the means to its achievement become moral too." I will refer to this statement later on.

The point is that this criticism of our "amorality" is made by many honest critics and also recently by some Party members, largely influenced by idealistic motives in joining the Party, not because they accept a transcendental standard for ethics. Most, if not all, do not. The substance of their criticism is our attitude towards specific moral values. Since the revelations of the Twentieth Congress it is difficult to deny that we have at least exposed ourselves to such charges, and none the less so because of admissions about "mistakes" and "grave crimes against socialist ethics".

The arguments therefore put forward by Dr. Lewis about the materialist basis of conduct seems to me to begin with the wrong emphasis. It is no answer to this in my opinion that Dr. Lewis adds as though it were an afterthought on page 59 the last two paragraphs beginning "Nevertheless Marxists are well aware" etc. In fact these paragraphs appear to me to be an expression of personal opinion totally unrelated to all the arguments which have gone on previously. They are an added conclusion to account for an obvious omission. They contain at least two highly controversial statements in the nature of an apology for what has happened recently and the quotation from Marx which rounds them off is a brilliant example of a *non sequitur*!

For these values, these general principles—the sacredness of human life, truthfulness, pity—are not merely of enormous importance. They are the very values we are accused of ignoring, of trampling on. Our attitude towards *these* values constitutes the gravamen of the charge against us. It is with these then that we should begin. We should show how they come into the Communist scheme of values, how they form part of the moral standard by which we too can be judged and how we justify, if we do, any "partial" or "temporary" deviation from them. It is not good enough to offer the easy excuse that we renounce them when compelled to do so, because the particular conditions of our bitter struggle do not leave us the alternative.

So too in the argument on "means" and "ends", it is certainly not enough to say, as Dr. Lewis says, in (6) on page 59, "only those means are legitimate which . . . do not lose more than they

gain". The problem of "means" and "ends" is not a specifically Communist one, but as it is a problem for us, we cannot dismiss it quite so easily. I cannot pursue it here, nor can I develop what I feel personally is the biggest moral problem, that of Marxism and truthfulness. Much remains to be done on these questions.

I think there is a good deal of value in the attempted analysis of the origins of moral conduct in society as a guide to our own attitude in dealing with these problems, but when the arguments are summed up on page 58 in (1), (2) and (3), one feels considerable doubt about what is proved. What seems to emerge is a pattern of moral standards which should be true in a socialist society, not what actually happens in bourgeois capitalist society. I cannot see that the reduction of the problem to so-called simpler primitive forms has "proved" what is stated.

This is followed by what I consider an unfortunate digression—a digression, because the summing-up on page 58, "Marxism must begin therefore . . ." does not follow from what has come before. As to the merits of Loeser's attack on Howard Selsam, I am not competent to judge, but I cannot help feeling that the point is that basic human needs are not of themselves the origin of moral law; the *methods* by which those needs are satisfied in society form that basis (Dr. Lewis himself says this on page 58 (1)). In a communist society therefore moral conduct must mean conformity to the laws of social development, but I have added "in a communist society". If I am correct then, Dr. Lewis should have gone on to say at the bottom of page 58, "Marxism must begin therefore with the basing of all obligation on the *methods of satisfying human needs*". If this sounds like a quibble about formulation, well, that comes of introducing a digression without analysing the points involved!

There is no discussion in the article of a number of issues which hinge on matters treated. For example, what of "values", good or bad, which already in bourgeois society have acquired in the course of time significance in themselves, emotive value, possibly? What is our attitude to them? Is "loyalty" for example merely a bourgeois value, or "democracy"? Are these bourgeois abstractions always, under all circumstances? Do we reject them? Do we always insist on reference to a concrete situation? Is "cruelty" not a "bad" in our eyes? Do we reject bourgeois artistic and aesthetic values? Are *all* bourgeois values "absolutes" or "class" morality?

These are not theoretical, academic, doctrinaire questions. Not only do the answers to them in practice win us or lose us valuable allies, but we must not forget the deep bourgeois indoctrination

of the British working class who certainly are not worried about the "transcendental" issue!

I hope that some attempt will be made by those interested to take up one or other of the problems suggested, and to develop them either in the way I have hinted at, or in some other way so as to bring them within an integrated scheme of Marxist ethics. No one can say that this has been done in Dr. Lewis's article.

## Reply to Discussion on Marxism and Morals

John Lewis

THE discussion which has taken place on "Marxism and the Moral Law" has made two things clear: firstly, the danger of discussing ethics in a vacuum, in purely abstract terms—one must always be prepared to convert the paper money of abstractions into the hard cash of concrete examples. Nothing is more urgent, more compelling, more capable of arousing enthusiasm on the one hand and indignation on the other than moral issues. All the more reason that we should always know precisely what we mean when we use ethical terms. The second thing that emerges is the difficulty some people find in realising that there is more than one kind of morality, or we had better say *claim* to morality. In fact there may be at least three such claims.

### Three Types of Morality

Firstly there is the "morality" which judges what is right solely in terms of the interests of a class; secondly there is the moral ideal of the general good, not the good of one class but of all men, good interpreted in the sense of the satisfaction of human needs; thirdly there are the rules of social life, whatever its particular form, that morality which is the necessary bond of co-operative existence and of mutual dependence.

(a) First then let us consider *class morality*, often claimed to be the only morality conceivable. There are two such claims—that of the ruling class, which thus seeks to justify its privileges, and that of the working class defending its rights. Plato advances an ethical justification for the caste society of Athens, and in every age the claims of those who regard themselves as the *élite* are advanced to justify racial and class privilege.

This may be a *claim* to morality, but it must be disallowed, because the mere assertion of sectional interests is not moral. A genuine morality must embrace the general interests of mankind.

It has also been claimed that morality is what is in the interests of the working class. Franz Loeser attributes this view to me, on what grounds I cannot imagine since my whole argument was that the victory of the working class can only be held to be moral if it serves the interests of society. If it only serves the interests of a class it is no more moral than capitalist morality. In so far then as this sectional interest is asserted to have moral validity we lay ourselves open to the charge so frequently levelled at Marxism, that we believe all moral judgments to be relative to the interests of social groups or that there is no morality higher than class morality. This would be the negation of morals. A working class victory is only moral if it brings into existence a society in which no sectional interest prevails, that is to say a classless society.

(b) Secondly we have the view that *the moral is what satisfies the widest range of human needs, in other words the general good*: "a really human morality which transcends class antagonisms" (Engels) and which is completely realised only in a classless society.

I am at a loss to understand why anyone should regard the satisfaction of human needs, which Marx makes "the first premise of all existence", as a merely subjective standard. Of course such needs must be *felt*, must satisfy, must be desired, and these are activities of the human mind, but *what* is valued, sought, fought for is surely entirely objective. What are our needs? Food, clothing, shelter, health, leisure, love, comradeship, travel, art—the list is endless, and these things are objective enough in all conscience.

Granted the ethical validity of our struggle for these ends, it follows that whatever is necessary to secure them becomes morally right too and partakes of the ethical quality of the chosen end. To put it the other way round, many things are *right* because they secure something valuable in itself; a minimum or better a maximum wage is morally right because it is necessary to secure food and clothing and life itself. But life is valuable for its own sake.

(c) Thirdly we have the morality which Lenin describes as "the elementary rules of social life that have been known for centuries", and Marx calls "the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals and the intercourse of nations". These rules or principles are independent of the class structure of society, except in so far as capitalism constantly distracts and frustrates them. No society of any kind can continue to exist without a minimum of co-operation, mutual trust, helpfulness, integrity and the rest. It is, of course, only under socialism that they can be fully accepted and

operate freely. Nor are they to be written off, as George Burgher does, because "they have a bourgeois look about them". They are just as explicitly and seriously enunciated in the classless society of the Soviet Union as in our own. Nor are they to be brushed aside, as Franz Loeser does, because they are merely subjective as contrasted with the objective morality of conformity to the law of social development,

Let us be concrete: do not we all, even Burgher and Loeser, get indignant at some unfairness or injustice inflicted upon us? Do not we feel indignation at cruelty and treachery? Do we not feel a glow of moral approval at some story of heroism, of fidelity to principle, of sacrifice for humanity? Are these ideals of human fellowship really of no significance? Do we not in every society recognise the importance of veracity, loyalty, generosity and pity?

If we turn to Soviet literature and drama, do not the novels and plays constantly deal with issues of this sort, which while they arise within the framework of a socialist society are basically universal? Do not Soviet readers appreciate the human values and standards in Shakespeare and Dickens? Would this be so if all morality were merely class morality and could not be otherwise (Burgher)?

Surely we are concerned here with those "durable elements" of which Engels says "the proletarian morality of the future" contains the maximum, but which are by implication *present in all moralities* even though in a lesser degree.

I do not for a moment deny that there are moralities peculiar to each age and class, that morality can be twisted and interpreted by class interests; I am simply pointing out that it is a mistake to speak *only* of class morality, there are permanent elements of morality too, and Marxist ethics has to do justice to both. Indeed it is precisely the failure to recognise the importance of these permanent elements of morality that is having such a disastrous effect today. It corrupts our Marxism and repels those who cannot be satisfied with indifference to moral standards.

### Is Morality mere Romanticism?

George Burgher characterises the reluctance we may feel at taking human life as "a very romantic notion of the Marxist jeopardising his own soul". But is the sacredness of life a negligible scruple? Is it not rather a deeply felt conviction of the whole human race? If when it comes to taking human life we simply do not care, if we regard the high value men place on life as a mere bourgeois prejudice, if we regard our class victory as the only criterion of morality and as

completely justifying everything, then we shall not only jeopardise our own souls (we shall certainly do that) but our cause as well, for we shall rightly incur the moral condemnation of numbers of upright and conscientious people whose support is indispensable, and we shall also wreck the good we are trying to do by the needless adoption of such means.

### Are Moral Rules Absolute?

Let me hasten to point out that it is equally possible, and just as disastrous, to make the opposite mistake and erect these moral principles into absolutes having a sanctity of their own, independent of their social utility. But social utility is the sole ground for morals, though principles which have established themselves because of their utility come to be *felt* as right in themselves. This strong feeling about morals, this commanding voice of conscience, is not lightly to be pushed aside, but it must in extreme circumstances be over-ruled if the loss incurred by keeping the commandments is greater than the loss consequent upon breaking them. This, however, does not lessen their importance or diminish the loss and tragedy involved in violating them.

John Shaw's thoughtful contribution seems to fall into this error—the opposite error to George Burgher's. His position is that socialist ethics must *begin* with the methods adopted to achieve our goal and not with the moral goal of a classless society. Therefore he fails to see the logic of my argument which is that because “the categorical imperative”, as Marx called it, in other words *our highest moral duty*, is human emancipation, *therefore* we may, on occasion, have to set aside certain moral rules, as when we are compelled to go to war to defend a socialist state against intervention.

### Morality Primarily Concerned with Ends

John Shaw fails to see that morality is primarily concerned with *ends* and only secondarily with *means*. The first step is to determine the goal; this sets us our tasks and lays upon us our duty. The end which thus presents us with the highest moral claim is the satisfaction of human needs, the aim of guaranteeing to men the completely unrestricted development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties, the fulfilment of the unlimited capacity of human nature for knowledge, enjoyment and creation, the struggle to create among men “an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Marx).

This being the end, victory in the class struggle

becomes the necessary means and partakes of the same moral quality as the end itself. It too becomes a moral aim. Hence the moral obligation to overthrow class privilege, to restore to men the dignity stripped from them when they became wage slaves, “the overthrow of all those conditions in which man is a degraded, servile, neglected, contemptible being” (Marx).

### The Source of the Moral Law

Neither George Burgher nor Franz Loeser accepts the authority of either the satisfaction of human needs or the general rules of social living as the moral imperatives of social life. Loeser imagines that I derive these “simple laws of morals and justice” (Lenin) from Freudian psychology! They arise of course not from Freud, but from human experience, and become authoritative for us by a process of social conditioning. Freud happens to call this process the formation of the super-ego, but social education and training of the young had been going on for a good many tens of thousands of years before Freud!

Loeser strongly objects to the derivation of such moral rules from human experience, feeling that this is pure subjectivism. The only objective source of morals, for him, is the law of social development.

Loeser is surely confusing two quite different meanings of the word “experience”. As used by certain philosophers it means our own mental states and they often argue that we can know nothing else. But scientists mean by it the sense experience of the external world which is the whole source of knowledge; the concrete apprehension of facts, of nature itself as it observably exists. But apart from the chemists and physicists we all learn from the panorama of life itself; and among the things we learn are the moral truths that justice, kindness, consideration for the interests of others, willingness to accept our share of the world's work, are indispensable standards of social life. Such values are accepted as the results of adjustment of attitudes which are bound to emerge in the context of social interaction, they are common to all societies and human life cannot go on without them.

To deny their objectivity would seem to indicate an amazing detachment from the realities of everyday life and an excessive preoccupation with the bloodless dance of abstract categories which is quite un-Marxist.

### Morals and the Laws of Social Development

Franz Loeser regards the laws of social development as the only valid source of morality.

"I define the most basic objective criterion of ethics as all that conforms to the laws of development of society."

Let us consider this view.

1. Suppose there were an iron law of social development. Why should its mere inevitability endue it with any *moral* quality? Mere evolutionary progress is not in itself moral. It has to be judged by its results, by a criterion outside the mere fact of succession. Much evolutionary development is evil—in biology degenerate parasites, beasts of prey, disease, bacteria and viruses. These are not good because they are the product of evolution. Nor is man superior to the tape-worm because he is the product of evolution, but for quite other reasons. If social development issues in a higher moral achievement it is only because we have ourselves taken a hand in making it evolve in the way that we approve. It does not evolve in a morally acceptable direction by itself.

2. There would be no laws of *social* development unless man and society and nature were interacting to secure something they value for its own sake. The laws of development do not go on independently of and outside man, so that man has merely to accept them and submit to them and make them his standard of right. Social development takes the course it does because man has certain values and therefore behaves in his unique revolutionary way to increase his welfare, to eliminate exploitation, to use the forces of nature for his own maximum advantage. There would be no laws of human development if man had no human aims.

3. But granted man and nature, man and the productive system, thus reacting on one another, then laws of development do appear, but they have value only in so far as they are *instrumental* in achieving human aims. Thus the laws of development are judged by the values they attain; values do not themselves derive from laws of development as such.

### Some Further Issues of Importance

Half a dozen minor points must just be mentioned very briefly.

1. *Can there be a contradiction between the right and the good?* Indeed there can! It is good to have a high wage and plenty of leisure; it may be right for you to live on a Party salary and have no leisure. It is good to live, but it may be right for you to sacrifice your life.

2. *Right must be defined.* "The category of right does not properly speaking belong to the sphere of ethics" (Franz Loeser). Right, which F. L. says I do not define (but I do so repeatedly), is that

which conduces to the maximum social good in which all share. It may and does cut across individual good, but in the long run it derives its authority from the fact that it maximises the distributive enjoyment of good by individuals.

3. *But are there individual rights?* Has a man a *moral* right to secure his own good, as well as a duty often to forgo his own good and always to submit to the restraints and obligations of social life? Yes, he has, and these are the human rights of every man to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", or, as declared in the Soviet Constitution, "the right to rest and leisure, the right to education, the right to work" etc., etc. These are what Stalin calls "the formal rights of citizens".

4. *Further development of morals under socialism.* Certainly, but a permanent core remains, just as a permanent core of Marxist truth remains.

5. *The Soviet Union* has been the scene of cruelties and injustices in the building of socialism; is not this the main ethical question for Marxists today, especially as it concerns the moral principles which should control our own struggle for power?

(a) The only way to face this issue is to get down to the basic principles of ethics, mere surface discussion gets nowhere.

(b) There is a type of Marxist ethical theory which can give rise to a cruelty, tyranny and untruthfulness which is indefensible. It is the theory which finds *no other* criterion of morality than victory in the class struggle. Marxists may be prevented from such conduct if they give full value to the general laws of morality, which, however, though authoritative are never absolute.

(c) To make such moral principles absolute is as immoral, as judged by its social consequences, as to reject them.

(d) Whatever has happened in the Soviet Union there has been an immense development of freedom, a great achievement of human welfare, a growth of respect for human personality, and a real emancipation from exploitation and race subordination.

We in the rest of the world have achieved far less and on balance are responsible for more deprivation of human liberty, more contempt for human life, and far less respect for human values than has been the case in Soviet Russia.

Judged by its satisfaction of basic human needs and its promise of even greater fulfilments on the basis of its achievements, communist society has secured the moral leadership of the world.