

THE 20th SOVIET C.P. PARLEY AND THE PATHS TO SOCIALISM

By **JOSEPH CLARK**

IT HASN'T BEEN EASY for the capitalist press to deny that the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party stressed, among other things:

1. Peaceful coexistence and the triumph of socialism not through war but through peace.

2. The possibility of peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism, including a parliamentary path to socialism.

3. A vast program for raising living standards in the Soviet Union, including the introduction, starting next year, of the seven hour day.

4. Collective leadership instead of the "cult of the individual."

5. Strict rule of law and democratic processes in the USSR. Also defense of the rights of the individual against violations such as those formerly organiz-

ed by the Security agencies of the USSR, in Leningrad, against the Jewish doctors, etc.

6. The challenge of the Soviet Union to our country to compete not in an arms race but to see which can provide more for the people's welfare.

7. The challenge of the Soviet Union to see who can do more to aid underdeveloped countries and to end poverty in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East.

MARGUERITE HIGGINS wrote in the N. Y. Herald Tribune (Feb. 20) about Khrushchev's report to the congress:

"It was a far more momentous speech than most of the Western world seems yet to realize."

What bothers Miss Higgins is that all the stale arguments used against communism fall so flat

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TODAY ABROAD

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when so many objections are removed by the frank declarations of policies designed to meet the real situation in the world today, as was done by the 20th congress.

Miss Higgins felt:

"Mr. Khrushchev's strongest international card undoubtedly was his renunciation of the inevitability of either war or revolutionary force in the establishment of communism, and his revival of the theory that different nations will travel their own different roads to socialism."

HERE WE HAVE no intention of discussing all the seven points listed above which were emphasized at the 20th congress. But we would like to single out here the question of the different roads to socialism.

Actually this was stressed by both Lenin and Stalin at various times. Lenin told the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1919:

"It would be absurd to represent our revolution as an ideal for all countries. . . . We have had practical experience in accomplishing the first steps towards destroying capitalism in a country where a particular relation exists between the proletariat and the peasantry. Nothing more. If we behave like a frog and puff ourselves out, we shall make fools of ourselves in the eyes of the world and shall be mere braggarts."

And in his polemics against

Trotsky on the Chinese revolution Stalin pointed out that the path to socialism varies with the national peculiarities of various countries. China would not follow the exact path taken by Russia, Stalin emphasized. (July, 1927.)

Ever since 1935 Communist parties all over the world have vigorously worked on the specific national features of their own country's struggle for socialism. American Communists proudly revived the traditions of Jefferson, Paine, Lincoln, Sylvis, Wedemeyer, Debs.

HOWEVER, there is no doubt that Communists in many countries, including America, have often paid insufficient attention to the question of their specific and necessarily distinctive path to socialism.

There is also no doubt that in relation to Yugoslavia the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party violated some basic principles affecting the national characteristics, as well as the national pride of the Yugoslavia's.

That was one reason why the reconciliation of the Soviet government and Yugoslavia last spring was so significant. And the Joint Declaration signed by Bulganin and Tito directly affected the issue of different paths to socialism.

As Bulganin and Tito put it in their historic declaration of June 2, 1955: "The concrete forms of development of socialism are exclusively the af-

fair of the peoples of the individual countries."

In its editorial published on the day the Declaration was adopted, Pravda wrote that for the international working-class movement the major importance of the Belgrade Declaration was its stress on the various paths to socialism.

MAURICE THOREZ, leader of the French Communist Party, in his greeting to the 20th congress singled out for emphasis his own interview with the London Times of Nov. 18, 1946. He quoted his words of that time that it was possible in France "to envisage other paths for socialism than the one followed by the Russian Communists." Thorez declared that "in every way, according to the Leninist theory, 'the path is necessarily different for each country.'"

Since the rise of fascism in the 30's American Marxists have been striving to develop the distinctive American path to socialism. And in May, 1949, William Z. Foster presented a programmatic document in the Smith Act trial which outlined a peaceful, constitutional possibility for transition to socialism.

It was a vital contribution of the American Communist Party program adopted in 1954 that it sought the specific American path of social progress. American Marxists still have an enormous job ahead of them in studying the peculiar features involving the social development of our country and its working class.