

# What Was New at Soviet Party Congress

By JOSEPH CLARK

THIS IS GOING to be one man's estimate of some new questions raised by the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, including those considered controversial.

First, just about everybody, except John Foster Dulles, agrees that the congress was animated by great confidence and its new policies arose from strength, not weakness.

That strength includes plain economics. Like the fact that Soviet production today is greater than that of Great Britain and West Germany combined.

Ring Lardner, Jr., in a letter to the editor suggests that one conclusion from the 20th Congress of the Soviet Party is that the American Left should re-examine itself. See page 10.

It includes education. Like the fact that the Soviet Union is now training more engineers and technical experts than our country. Also that compulsory high school education being introduced under the new five year plan will make the Soviet school-leaving age, 17. This is two years beyond that in Britain and in advance of many states in our country.

It includes military strength based on the same weapons that our country has been developing—A-bombs, H-bombs, long-range jet bombers and intercontinental missiles. In fact, Washington now informs us that the Russians are testing a 1,500 mile missile and that we don't have that off the drawing board as yet.

The confidence of this congress derived primarily from its analysis that the main feature of the present era is that socialism is no longer confined to a single country but has become a world system.

SECOND, the Soviet leaders believe that Lenin's postulate of the inevitability of war under imperialism no longer obtains today in the new world situation.

This is based on their estimate that the forces of peace are stronger than the forces of war and are therefore able to prevent war.

What's the difference between that and what was said at the 19th congress of the CPSU in 1952? Then too, the Soviet Communists felt that the peace forces were stronger than the war forces and could prevent any particular war.

But this time the Soviet leaders removed an ambiguity in Stalin's formulation of this point in his "Economic problems of Socialism in the USSR." In that work Stalin also pointed out that the peace forces can prevent war. But he added that in respect to conflicts among the imperialist powers themselves, Lenin's proposition on the inevitability of war still obtained. At the 20th congress the Soviet Communists said flatly that the new world situation had altered this. While imperialists create the danger of war as long as they have any power at all the ability of the peace forces to prevent war and establish lasting peace, has modified Lenin's formulation.

In listing the factors on the side of peace, the 20th congress included countries which take a "neutralist" position in world affairs, like India, Burma, Scandinavian countries, etc. They also included socialist and liberal movements which take a similar position. Thus, they revised the negative view taken of the "third force" and the "neutralists" some years ago by the Soviet Communists and by the seven Communist parties in the Cominform.

The 20th congress noted that

the Soviet Communists had made a greater contribution to world peace as a result of more flexible foreign policies. For example, they ended the isolation of Soviet people and institutions from contact with foreigners. They pointed to errors in foreign policy which they had made and which created tensions, such as the split with Yugoslavia, and their rectification.

THIRD, in reaffirming the Leninist proposition on peaceful coexistence of capitalist and socialist countries, the Soviet leaders showed that this was not merely "tactical" or "temporary."

Ever since Lenin's decree on peace, issued one day after the Soviet government was set up, the Soviet Union based its foreign policy on the possibility of peaceful coexistence with capitalism. But for many years the anti-Sovieters tried to get away with the argument that, since the Communists believe communism will triumph everywhere, they thereby visualize an inevitable armed conflict with the capitalist world. This time Khrushchev and the other spokesmen went out of their way to answer the argument specifically. They stressed their confidence that the ideas of socialism would triumph everywhere. They noted that in peaceful competition between socialism and capitalism the former was bound to win and could do so without war, without violence.

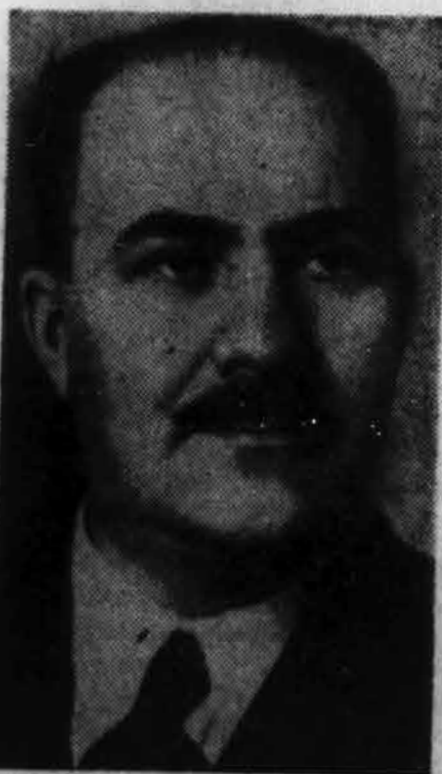
FOURTH, the Soviet leaders said that under present conditions they recognized the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism in various countries. They also said that working people would be able to establish socialism through parliamentary means.

Thus, they reaffirmed the Marxist premise that Communists never seek violence, in transition or in anything else. For example, in 1917 after the overthrow of the Tsar, Lenin foresaw the possibility of a peaceful socialist revolution.

At the 20th congress they developed this point further. They said that as a result of their successful revolution and socialist construction and the successful socialist revolutions involving one third of the world, conditions are now much more favorable for peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism.

FIFTH, they clarified their views on the Leninist precept that all countries will take their own national path to socialism. They dumped overboard old ideas and practices which tended to violate that principle.

For example, they made it clear that Yugoslavia under Tito had



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During a recess in the proceedings of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, delegates chat in corridor. In foreground, left to right, Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan are talking with woman delegate.

taken its own specific path to socialism. Furthermore, they not only showed that there were distinctly different paths to socialism in China, Yugoslavia, and the peoples democracies, but that many more different forms would probably arise in the course of time.

Basically, the terrible mistake made, when the Soviet Union split with Yugoslavia, had been admitted by the Soviet leaders when they went to Belgrade last year. But the 20th congress indicated, even if it did not explain, that the errors which produced the split were Soviet errors and not shared by the Yugoslav Communists.

The congress enthusiastically received Tito's greetings. And Pravda has been printing articles from the Yugoslav Communist press and by Yugoslav leaders which give a very positive appraisal of the 20th congress.

In showing that Marxists elsewhere would have to find their own specific road to socialism the Soviet Communists did not to any degree deprecate the world-wide significance of theirs, the first successful socialist transformation in the world. But they did show how erroneous was the view that people elsewhere could arrive at socialism by imitating the Russians.

For that matter the congress served to point up what Lenin told the fourth congress of the Communist International in 1922. Lenin criticized, at that time, a basic resolution of the previous congress, as "too Russian," which, he felt, made it inapplicable to Communists in other lands.

SIXTH, the congress adopted a sixth five year plan which provides a record advance, including expansion of consumer goods and improved living conditions. It will introduce a seven hour working day; raise wages 30 percent and increase farm income 40 percent. Also, the lowest categories of pensions and wages are to be raised considerably. Housing construction is to be doubled.

SEVENTH, they rectified what they considered a wrong estimate of the role of Gandhi and other

bourgeois democratic leaders of colonial movement. They felt that their previous negative attitude to Gandhi and similar movements was harmful and wrong.

EIGHTH, the 20th congress reported that in the past three years or so the Soviet Communists had re-instituted collective leadership. They sharply condemned the cult of the individual which had been practiced in the Party for many years. Unfortunately, the congress did not explain how this came about and why it happened. Nor did the leaders of the Soviet Party explain how they personally had tolerated such a situation.

To some extent the congress evaluated the role of Stalin. They implied that the tremendous achievements of the Soviet Union in building socialism, in defeating anti-Party groupings like the Trotskyites, Bucharinites and Bourgeois nationalists, in building up heavy industry as a basis for all-around economic growth, in winning victory over Hitler, and in swiftly rebuilding the USSR after the terrible destruction of the war, took place under the leadership of the Party when its outstanding figure was Joseph Stalin.

However, they also condemned the glorification of Stalin, which produced a situation, they said, that was very harmful to the Party and the Soviet Union. The glorification led to a cult—in which they all participated; but they did not explain why they did. Such a cult is harmful above all because it deprives the people of the major credit for the achievements of history.

Out of this cult came bureaucracy, violations of inner-Party democracy, insufficient criticism and self-criticism. According to the 20th congress, this affected the Party for 20 years. The congress took a strong stand for democracy, for criticism and self-criticism and for elimination of bureaucratic methods of leadership.

In re-evaluating the role of Stalin the congress implied, more by omission than anything else, that they did not consider Stalin a "founder" or "classico" of Marx-

ism, in the same sense as Marx, Engels and Lenin. Unfortunately they did not elaborate on this. Possibly they felt that the negative developments under Stalin's leadership made it difficult to give a rounded estimate.

NINTH, the 20th congress condemned tendencies which had developed to violate Soviet laws and constitutional guarantees protecting citizens against any injustice. The congress said that such abuses took place under the Security Ministry headed by Beria. The congress outlined policies and procedures to insure the supremacy of law, of the Soviet constitution, including its bill of rights, and against any efforts to abuse those rights.

TENTH, the congress condemned practices of rewriting history in order to explain away events in history. It expressed great dissatisfaction with the insufficient works of history, economic and philosophy.

ELEVENTH, one might mention the kind of challenge the 20th congress is to our country. It challenged America to compete in friendship. It proposed trade instead of an arms race. It proposed lasting American-Soviet friendship and cooperation.

It proposed competition in raising wages, cutting working hours, extending education, improving social insurance.

It offered competition in helping development of the underdeveloped countries, and ending poverty everywhere.

These things prove that what was new at the congress was good for Americans.

Still, there is much more to be said about how this congress effects creative activity of Marxists everywhere. Above all, in matters of theory, this 20th congress was marked by an all-out assault against dogmatism. Dogmatism is death to Marxism. I hope to return to this subject again.

Meanwhile, this is only one man's views, who would appreciate it if our readers wrote and told us theirs.