

AN HISTORIC STATEMENT

WE ARE CONFIDENT the overwhelming majority of our readers join us in greeting the statement of the National Committee of the Communist Party on the Khrushchev speech.

In our opinion this is an historic statement in the life not only of the Communist Party of the United States but of the general socialist movement in our country.

The National Committee, in its statement, outlines its attitude to the basic task of building an independent American socialist movement, its attitude to the existing socialist countries and its attitude to Communist parties throughout the world. Such a statement is important not only for American Communists and friends of the Communist Party. It is important too for all Americans, for whom the issue of co-existence and peaceful competition between capitalist and socialist countries is an urgent one right now, and for whom the question of changes in American society will become more and more urgent in the future.

Many newspapers are aware of the impact the statement is bound to make and they are already trying to undercut it. One line of attack is that the Communist Party "is adding its voice," as the New York Times puts it, to those of other parties. But as the statement itself points out and as the Times itself says elsewhere, Marxists began to outline in the Daily Worker a new approach as far back as the middle of March, and at its four-day meeting at the end of April the National Committee of the Communist Party called for a new look at its relations with the countries of socialism and with other Communist parties.

The main line of attack, however, upon the American and other Communist parties goes like this: Their statements "must be regarded as hypocritical and unacceptable" (N. Y. Times) because they "have not given up their goal of dictatorship, the root institution from which Stalin's and his colleagues' crimes arose"; and that the Communists have not "understood that full democracy and right of dissent are essentials for any tolerable human society."

Let's leave aside just how full is "full democracy" under capitalism and just how sacred is the right of dissent. Let's leave aside the shameful record of the New York Times on these fundamental principles at many a critical moment such as the Smith Act arrests. But the fact remains that the National Committee statement calls for a thorough examination of just these questions in relation to socialism.

"Also required," says the statement, "is a further and deeper examination of such questions as the structure and operation of socialist democracy in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as well as of the new problems and perspectives arising as the workers of other lands move toward socialism. This will illuminate the source of past errors and help avoid future ones."

Changes are already under way in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. These changes may not be fast enough, but one thing we can say with complete assurance: socialism in America will differ from the specific Russian conditions of socialism in the Soviet Union. It will also seek to avoid the mistakes of that epoch-making experience and will be a democratic socialism—democratic in the fullest sense of the word and far exceeding the rights won by the people under capitalism in our country.