

# To Spur Independence; Review of Questions

THE ENEMIES of the Soviet Union and socialism, more in search of ammunition for their disruptive ends than for the real significance of the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress, are saying the American Marxists are getting a "new line" from Moscow. But the one thing that stands out most in the reports and discussions at the 20th Congress is the new emphasis on the independence of the Marxists of each land and the end of an era when even friendly criticism of affairs in the socialist lands was frowned upon.

The implications of the 20th Congress will, nevertheless, have a powerful influence on the Marxist and entire working class movement in the world.

It should be borne in mind that the entire ground for the cases against Communists, or alleged Communists, in America, is based not on what they themselves do or say in their programs and literature, but on what appears (or is interpreted to be) in books, originally published in the Soviet Union. The prosecutors and trade union bureaucrats harp mostly on long liquidated relationships, like those that existed in the days of the Communist International. The 20th Congress removed all possibility for any further "legal" contortions to build "conspiracy" cases on the basis used now.

IT CAN HARDLY be expected that Attorney General Herbert Brownell would honestly acknowledge that the 20th Congress leaves him not even a shred for conspiracy trials. But in the eyes of the people, as even the government will sense, an indictment based on the Smith, McCarran or T-H Affidavits laws, will look more ridiculous and groundless than ever.

We can also anticipate:

- The Smith Acts built into many union constitutions — anti-Communist bars — will lose much of their force and legal status in the unions.

- The basis for much of anti-Soviet attacks will be removed as the effects are felt: on the one hand, of democratization and collective leadership in the Soviet Union; on the other, by the development of a more natural attitude among Marxists and other progressives, to the socialist countries, including the exercise of responsible, constructive criticism.

- The red-baiters of America will lose their major ammunition. The House Un-American Committee is already calling them to especially arranged hearings to discuss ways to "save" the basis for their profession.

- The possibility is greatly improved for American Marxists and friends of socialism to agitate for a popular program for socialism, in accordance with American historic conditions and possibilities. Hitherto, in the public mind, the outlook for American socialism was too often mechanically associated with the Soviet course and experience.

- Notwithstanding the views of some of the top labor leaders, the net result of the 20th Congress will be a better atmosphere for right-left unity throughout the world, including America. And that in the long run will also improve the possibility for the left to participate in the main stream of American labor — and that, of course, means mainly in the newly formed AFL-CIO.

- A far better possibility will open for the development of contacts and the exchange of labor delegations between America and the socialist lands, especially in view of the steps being taken (as noted in Khrushchev's speech) to stimulate a spirit of militancy and struggle in the USSR's unions and the greater welcome by Soviet lead-

ers of criticism and advice from abroad.

THE FAR-REACHING self-criticism and re-evaluation that is taking place in the Soviet Union, certainly serves as an example to Marxists, including those of America. It seems to me that if the leaders of the Soviet Union can go as far as they are going in a review of their course and practices and Stalin's contributions; and to so frankly reverse past views as they did on Yugoslavia and on the Ghandi-Nehru and similar movements in the former colonial countries, then surely there is much for American Marxists to review. It is necessary to do so not to "get in line" with the 20th Congress, but because the pressure has long been felt on AMERICAN SOIL for needed changes to bring America's left in stride with developing conditions and realities. In my opinion America's left on the whole, has been behind the left of most other countries in getting into step with the fast changing times. To indicate just a few of the questions:

- We have been repeatedly stressing that the peace sentiment in the country is strong — strong enough to decide even national elections. But the one baffling thing to the world is the almost total absence of articulation of this will for peace in the trade union movement. There is obvious lack of a real appreciation of the significance of the struggle for peace and insufficient will in the left to tackle the problem. At the bottom there must be a serious theoretical weakness on the entire question. Is it an underestimation of the view that war is NOT inevitable?

- American Marxists have for many years stressed their opposition to force and violence and their aims for a constitutional road to socialism. But neither socialism as an objective nor argumentation for the possibility of such peaceful transition, has figured much in Marxist popular agitation, or in attitude toward, or relations with other sections of the labor movement. If an interested worker were to ask at one of the workers' bookshops for a pamphlet or book on what the Marxists of America want, there would be nothing to give him except for some very much antiquated material that is worse than nothing.

- Until quite recently, the trend of the Marxists and left forces in the unions, has been towards a break with others with whom they were associated in the past, most often because of

insistence on narrowness and rigidity on problems and issues. The fault was not always or entirely on the other side. I have even heard "straying" unionists who insisted they are still on the left, called "Titoites." Considerable progress has been made towards an appreciation of the tremendous significance and potential of the labor merger. But there are still people who are very cold towards it.

- There is a tremendous confusion on the economics of America and on a economic program for the workers, as evident by divergence of views on such questions like "GAW" — supplementary unemployment insurance — and the dogmatic, mechanical application of the theory of absolute impoverishment to conditions in America today.

THE ABOVE are only a few questions back of which there is unquestionably much theoretical unclarity. In raising those questions I do not suggest that I have all the answers. But I see the urgency of dealing with them in the field to which I am closest if the progressive forces are to make much headway in the unions.

In general, I believe we are at a point in America today where many in labor and in the farm and Negro people's movements are giving their programs a closer look. Many, many things in the world and in America have not turned out in recent years in accordance with the expectations of large numbers of leaders and followers. The Marxists are not the only people looking for better answers. The 20th Congress has undoubtedly stimulated the trend to re-examine and reevaluate.

At such a moment, it seems to me, it is incumbent upon those on the left to be humble and, as Khrushchev suggests to all Marxists, even those in Europe with millions of followers, to look more for the points of agreement with others than for grounds for recriminations. I am also thinking of the tremendous number of people who have been with the left in recent years, who due to McCarthyism or other reasons, have drifted off or were encouraged to do so, although basically they remain progressives in varying degrees. They should be encouraged to get back into the progressive stream, and that could happen only if a frank and honest re-examination is made of many questions.

The same holds with respect to united front possibilities with all others.

(The end)

## Pravda's Editorial on Stalin

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society, led an irreconcilable struggle against the incorrect view that history is allegedly made by outstanding personalities.

Marxism-Leninism opposed to these incorrect views of history the teachings that the people are the genuine makers of history and that the deeper and wider the social transformations, the more numerous are the popular masses taking part in them. The Great October Socialist Revolution, which has exerted an influence on all subsequent world history, was accomplished by the working class of our country in alliance with the poorest peasantry and with the support of the middle peasantry, under the leadership of the Communist Party.

It was accomplished by the majority of the people and therefore it was a people's revolution.

Marxism does not deny the role

of outstanding personalities in history, the role of leaders of the working people in directing the revolutionary liberation movement, in building a new society.

Lenin emphasized most vigorously the role of revolutionary leaders as organizers of the masses. The materialist conception of history, worked out by the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the recognition that the working masses, the people, are the makers of the new society, makes it possible to understand and assess correctly the role of the leaders, organizers, initiators and heroes whom the peoples themselves create and promote.

Outstanding personalities, thanks to distinguishing features making them most capable for serving the public interests, can play an important role in society as organizers and leaders of the masses, understanding events more and seeing further than others.