


TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

How People's Democracy Was Viewed in 1947



MARXISM triumphed over Stalinism in Poland and thus saved the day for the cause of socialism. Hungary faces a threat of capitalist restoration because the delay in reestablishing Marxist principles discredited socialism.

The specific Marxist principles involved had been stressed by the Polish Communists long before Tito raised them in Yugoslavia. It is most instructive, in this regard, to re-read an article by Wladyslaw Gomulka which appeared in the magazine Political Affairs in April, 1947. This was a speech by Gomulka to a meeting of active members of the Polish Workers Party and the Polish Socialist Party, later merged into the present United Workers Party.

The Workers Party was a successor to the Communist Party of Poland, dissolved in most mysterious fashion in 1938 by the Communist International commission on Poland, headed by Stalin. Two of the founders of the Polish C.P., and successive general-secretaries, Lenski and Warski, were framed-up and executed as "spies" in Moscow. They have since been "rehabilitated" and the other Communist parties who participated in the liquidation of the Polish C.P. have admitted the action was baseless and wrong.

GOMULKA wrote in that article, which was widely reprinted in the Communist press of the world:

"On the basis of unity of action of both workers' parties, with

close cooperation with other democratic parties, the Polish Workers Party established the conception of the Polish way of development toward socialism. This conception is significant because it does not include the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat as a form of government in the most difficult period of transition.

"On the basis of realistic views we have established the possibility of development toward socialism through the system of people's democracy in which the bloc of democratic parties exercises the power of government. This conception, calculating on a peaceful, evolutionary development, would have been difficult to conceive without the presupposition of close cooperation of both our parties and of a worker-peasant alliance.

"Some people repeat constantly that the Polish Workers' Party is aiming at the dictatorship of the proletariat and wants to establish socialism in Poland by following the same road as the Soviet Union."

Such people, Gomulka added, "do not understand Marxism at all," and "do not know how to draw conclusions from the differences between historical epochs and concrete historical situations. . . ."

THEN THE Polish Communist leader analyzed the differences between Poland and Russia, and between the two historical epochs in which their respective revolutions took place.

Regarding perspectives for

Polish agriculture, Gomulka said that "there is not the slightest need for us to follow the Soviet pattern of agricultural economy. We have rejected collectivization, since in Polish conditions it would be harmful in the economic and political sense. . . ."

As for political democracy Gomulka wrote:

"Polish democracy is exercising power through a multi-party parliamentary system . . . the form will be the Parliament, chosen in general elections. . . ."

"Our democracy," Gomulka concluded, "has many elements of socialist democracy and also many elements of liberal-bourgeois democracy, just as our economic system has many features of socialist and capitalist economy. Our type of democracy and our social system we have designated 'Peoples Democracy'."

And in each of the East European countries similar variations of such a "Peoples Democracy" was worked out. In Czechoslovakia, for example, Eduard Benes, a liberal bourgeois political leader, was president of the government in which the Communist Klement Gottwald was premier. And the Communists had received the highest vote in a free parliamentary election.

By 1948, Stalin cracked down on the whole concept of people's democracy. With the expulsion of the Yugoslav Communists from the Cominform, one pattern was accepted in the East European countries. It imitated the Soviet path. It was this radical departure from Marxism which paved the way for the repressive regimes and Stalinist procedures which imperiled the entire cause of socialism.