CONGRESSES of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have always proved to be important landmarks in the history of the Soviet people, and the 23rd Congress, held in Moscow from March 29 to April 8 this year, was no exception. It was this party, under the leadership of Lenin, which made the first breakthrough to socialism, in the October socialist revolution in 1917.

Today, there are many socialist states and the world socialist system is a major influence in world events. It was inevitable, therefore, that the 23rd Congress was followed with close interest, by friends and foes, throughout the world.

The 5,000 delegates to the Congress consisted of workers, farmers, scientists, engineers, teachers, writers, artists, soldiers, sailors, airmen and the various national groups. In short, all sections of the Soviet people were represented.

There were also present 86 delegations from fraternal Communist and workers' parties and national-democratic and socialist parties of the world.

The 23rd Congress had to take decisions on the economic, political and social problems of the U.S.S.R., on foreign policy and peace, and on the policy of the C.P.S.U. towards the other socialist countries and the world Communist movement.
It is possible to examine only some of these issues in this article.

At the centre of the discussions on domestic matters were the control figures and proposals for the new Five-year plan for 1966-70.

The figures for the 7-year Plan which was completed at the end of 1965 had been exceeded. Industrial production was up 84 per cent, that is 4 per cent above the plan; living standards had risen and the Soviet economy was much stronger all round.

Despite these great achievements the 7-year Plan showed up weaknesses in the economy. Some targets had not been reached, especially in agriculture, and there were shortcomings in management, planning and so on. Also subjectivist mistakes were made when N. Khrushchov held the leading party and government posts. Objective economic laws and scientific methods were not always fully taken into account and mistakes were made in other fields. Moreover, the growth of Soviet production and the developments in science and technology posed new questions for solution.

The October 1964 meeting of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. saw the fall of N. Khrushchov. He had proposed a plan to deal with agriculture which was rejected by the Committee and he resigned his positions as First Secretary and Premier.

The period between the October 1964 meeting and the 23rd Congress was marked by nationwide discussions within the C.P.S.U. and among the people, on the plans worked out by the C.C., at their March and September, 1965, meetings for the reorganisation of agriculture and methods of improving industrial production. The 23rd Congress was the culminating point in these discussions.

The new Five-year Plan decided upon at the 23rd Congress set far-reaching tasks which will take the Soviet people much further along the path to Communism. Industrial production is to rise 50 per cent by 1970, agriculture by more than 25 per cent and living standards by some 30 per cent. The most modern scientific and technical methods of production will be used in industry and agriculture.
The main stress in the reports and discussion at the 23rd Congress was on improving scientific methods of management, on raising the consciousness of the workers and increasing their material interest in their work, on better planning and giving scope for greater initiative for factories and for state and collective farms in the field of production.

The new system of planning, which extends over whole branches of industry, is important. Only certain key items will be decided upon by ministries instead of an over-all factory plan. This leaves much to the initiative of management and workers. They will decide on the details of production in relation to the key items, but they will also determine what additional items of production the factory is capable of producing, and their quantity and quality.

Also the trend is towards new forms of distribution. Some food and textile factories, for example, are supplying products directly to distributors and thus establishing a closer link with consumers.

Under this method quality goods will sell quickly and the profits of the factory will rise. A large part of this increased income will go into factory funds, to improve the incomes of the workers, for home construction, kindergartens and factory social services. As this new system extends, the interest of management and workers in the quality as well as the quantity of their products will grow. This should give a stimulus to production and help raise living standards.

It is suggested by the capitalist press that the new system of planning, with emphasis on the marketing of goods and the profitability of enterprises, is a retreat from socialism towards capitalism. But this is wrong. All the industries of the Soviet Union are publicly owned. There is just no hope of private enterprise and the capitalist system of exploitation of the workers ever being restored.

The need for the profitability of enterprises is not new. It has always been recognised as essential to socialist economy. The system of socialist planning and marketing is simply being improved to meet the changing situation. The latest proposals are realistic and will
strengthen the socialist system and hasten the progress to communism.

The new methods throw more responsibility and initiative on to management and staff in the factories and the collective and state farms. The trade unions will have more responsibility in planning at every stage. There will be closer ties between managements and workers in factories. The effect of these changes must be to raise the social consciousness of the people and strengthen socialist democracy.

Socialist democracy is much more thorough and embracing than capitalist democracy, under which laws are formulated and the liberties of the people are restricted to the needs and interests of the monopoly capitalists.

In the socialist countries monopoly capitalism has been abolished and all means of production are publicly owned. Because of this the basis for real people's democracy becomes possible, with the working people participating, in ever greater numbers, in all the forms of government, and in the direction of economic, political, social and cultural activities.

The 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. which condemned the personality cult and the violations of socialist democracy that occurred under Stalin had, also, decided on measures for the more rapid development of Soviet democracy. This process was continued at the 22nd Congress, when the programme of the C.P.S.U. for the building of Communism was adopted. There can be no doubt that the decisions of the 23rd Congress will strengthen this trend.

As well as extending the responsibility and independence of managements and workers in the various enterprises, the Congress pressed for still more thorough involvement of the people in government activities on an all-Union, republican, regional and municipal scale, and in all other mass activities and movements.

The widening base of socialist democracy is clearly evident. There are some aspects of the democratic process, however, which have caused us concern. The Australian, and some other Communist Parties, voiced their criticism of the action taken by the Soviet authorities against the two writers, Sinyavsky and Daniel.
There is no doubt that the writers were guilty of the charges brought against them. They were engaged in anti-Soviet activity, had established links, through a foreign embassy, with anti-communist organisations abroad and had provided these latter with material attacking the Soviet Union and socialism. The action taken against them was supported, overwhelmingly, by the Soviet people.

In spite of these things, however, we considered that, after 49 years of Soviet power, the writers did not represent a danger to the Soviet state and, therefore, the action taken against them was unnecessary and wrong.

The newspapers in the capitalist countries distorted the facts of the case, covered up the conspiracy the writers had been engaged in and succeeded in creating doubts about socialist democracy among many people. This was damaging to the Soviet Union and communism.

Democracy is not an abstract concept and cannot be separated from the position of classes or the class struggle. There is capitalist democracy which serves the class interests of monopoly capital and is, therefore, limited and restricted for the masses, and there is socialist democracy, which serves the class interests of the working people, who are the vast majority.

We know that, here in Australia, in every struggle the people wage and in every big campaign they undertake, democratic liberties are attacked and have to be defended.

The issue of democracy is a vital one for us.

Among the people there is wide and growing understanding of the fundamental role of the Soviet Union in preserving world peace. The great economic achievements of socialism likewise influence the masses of people. It is necessary to face the fact, however, that there is serious doubt and misunderstanding about Soviet democracy. It has made the least impact. The violations of Soviet democracy and justice during the period of the cult of Stalin has left a deep impression. Capitalist propagandists know this. They take every opportunity to attack the Soviet Union on the issue of democracy and the action taken against the Soviet writers was grist to their mill.
It is not sufficient for the Communists and other people inclined to socialism to understand that socialist democracy is much broader than capitalist democracy. The mass of the people must also appreciate this fact. And for this not only the practice of Soviet democracy is important, but also how it appears to the masses, or in other words, the image it creates.

In the struggle against the reactionary influences of bourgeois ideology, repressive measures are not necessarily the answer; indeed, they can seriously rebound. Most important is the ideological struggle, the striving for socialist conviction, the combating of reactionary bourgeois ideas with the truth of socialism.

Greater emphasis on this aspect of the struggle will strengthen socialist democracy and win more support among the people throughout the world.

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The 23rd Congress gave close attention to the international situation and the urgent problems of preserving peace. It expressed concern at the dangerous tensions that exist because of the aggressive policies of imperialism. The dirty war of U.S. imperialism against the people of Vietnam was condemned and so also the plans to place nuclear weapons in the hands of the West German militarists, which seriously threaten European security.

The divisions in the world communist movement impinge on these issues and, in a particular way, on the struggle in Vietnam.

The Communist Party of China, the Albanian Party of Labor, and some other parties refrained from sending fraternal representatives to the 23rd Congress. Nearly all other communist and workers' parties of the world were present.

After October, 1964, the C.P.S.U., in an effort to improve relations with the C.P.C., refrained from public polemics on the ideological differences. Its aim was to strengthen the basis for unity, and not sharpen differences. It was in this spirit that it approached the 23rd Congress.

The attitude of the C.P.C. to unity was frankly put prior to the 23rd Congress, when it said, in a statement
on relations with the C.P.S.U.: there is "nothing that unites us, and everything that divides us."

The C.P.S.U. position, on the other hand, was that "there is more that unites than divides us" and that there exists a real basis for common action.

No one can doubt the correctness of the stand taken by the C.P.S.U. which is also the stand of the overwhelming majority of the Communist Parties. This is especially clear in the light of developments in South East Asia.

The U.S. imperialists have taken advantage of the divisions in the world communist movement to press their aggression against South Vietnam and to escalate the war against North Vietnam. Now, a new and grave danger threatens, that they will escalate the war against China. In such conditions there is the most urgent need for unity and for common action by the Communist Parties and socialist states to preserve the independence and integrity of Vietnam, and to remove the threat to China and to world peace. How is it possible, in this situation, to say that nothing unites us, everything divides us?

Ideological differences notwithstanding, unity and common action is both possible and necessary.

The Soviet Union, which has rendered continuing economic, military and political support to Vietnam, has called for joint meetings of the socialist countries to decide on common efforts to assist the Vietnamese people.

At the 23rd Congress the C.P.S.U., declaring that "nobody will ever succeed in extinguishing the torch of socialism held high by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", solemnly proclaimed its "solidarity with the heroic Vietnamese people" and demanded that the U.S.A. stop its aggression and withdraw all interventionist troops. It called for "united action" by the socialist countries and all the Communist and workers' parties in support of the Vietnamese people.

Among the foreign leaders of Communist and workers' parties to address the 23rd Congress, the first secretary of the Party of the Working People of Vietnam, Le Duan, commanded great attention. He thanked the C.P.S.U., the Soviet Government and people for the "tremendous
and varied assistance" to the Vietnamese people, and spoke of the “lofty proletarian internationalism” of the C.P.S.U. He said that the Vietnamese Communists will devote “all our efforts to the struggle for the cohesion of the socialist camp and the international Communist movement” and would be “loyal to the revolutionary principles of the Moscow Declaration of 1957 and the Moscow Statement of 1960.”

Nguyen Thi Binh, leader of the delegation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, also expressed gratitude for the “support from the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries” rendered to her people.

In face of the statements of Le Duan and Nguyen Thi Binh, how is it possible to give any credence to the latest statements of the C.P.C. denigrating Soviet assistance to the Vietnamese people?

The speeches of the fraternal delegates from North and South Vietnam aroused great enthusiasm and also scenes of great emotion among delegates and visitors to the 23rd Congress. Spokesmen for each of the foreign delegations present at the Congress expressed their Party's solidarity with Vietnam's struggle against the U.S. aggressors, and their support for united action by the socialist countries and the Communist and Workers' Parties of the world.

The 23rd Congress did not engage in polemics with the C.P.C. on the ideological differences in the world Communist movement. It did, however, call, in strong and clear terms, for common action in support of the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against U.S. aggression. It proclaimed its support for world Communist unity on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and the principles laid down in the decisions of the Moscow conferences of 1957 and 1960.

The fact that nearly all the Communist and workers' parties of the world were represented at the 23rd Congress was most important. They made clear their support for international Communist unity and they declared their solidarity with the C.P.S.U.

The 23rd Congress, therefore, made its contribution, a very positive and constructive one, to the movement for the restoration of world Communist unity.