

COMMUNIST "INDEPENDENCE"

The national convention of the Communist party in this country has now ended with at least one clear result: There was no open split in the party during the convention, though what may happen in the next few weeks remains conjectural. Certainly those who feel like the delegate who accused his colleagues of "throwing the science of Marxism-Leninism out of the window" may be tempted to go off on their own if they receive encouragement from Moscow. But if no split occurs the Communists hope to repair their present shrunken stature by creating what they call "a labor-peoples anti-monopoly coalition" and by winning the cooperation of non-Communist liberal groups. They believe these endeavors will be aided by a new reputation for "independence" from Moscow.

Considering the history of communism in this country, any claims regarding their "independence" would seem deserving of a cautious and skeptical approach. The claim is now made because the convention just ended voted that Communists here will interpret and apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism "in accordance with the requirements of the American class struggle and democratic traditions." The convention has also declared for itself "the right to friendly criticism of brother parties or the actions of socialist governments."

That such declarations may conceivably bring Moscow's wrath down upon Communists here is not to be excluded, but there is another side of the story as well. The Marxist-Leninist ideology is essentially a totalitarian ideology developed under the conditions of Western Europe a century ago and of Russia thirty-five to fifty years ago. Such a basic concept as that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which under Lenin became the dictatorship of the Communist party, is not compatible with "democratic traditions" here or elsewhere.

The result of the convention is apparently a compromise aimed at keeping party unity, but for most Americans we suspect it will seem an inadequate shift. Marxism-Leninism requires renunciation, not merely reinterpretation.

The New York Times

Published: February 14, 1957

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