

HOW THE PATH WILL BE FORGED

INDIA'S PATH to socialism has been the most widely discussed subject in our country since the achievement of national independence. The roots of this interest are not at all academic. Having got rid of imperialist rule, the eradication of its heritage of backwardness and poverty stood out as our most pressing task. Further, we are living in an epoch of world history in which suffering humanity finds no solution to the problems of misery and starvation, of ignorance and disease, of a culturally degraded existence, except through an advance to socialism.

Looking beyond the most exploited and oppressed sections of the people, progressive and humanistic thought currents in the modern world, emanating from social elements with relatively much higher living standards and an access to good education, are also gravitating towards socialism.

The monumental achievements of the Soviet Union and many other socialist countries have become an inspiration for people all over the world.

Socialist ideas and ideals have a far more powerful attraction and appeal today than any other contemporary philosophy, whether in India or abroad.

In our own country, barring the political parties of extreme reaction, such as the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party, there is hardly any party which has not declared socialism as its ultimate goal.

The question would be asked, and in fact, is asked very widely, that this being so, why should there be so many different parties all claiming to lead the country to the same goal?

The reasons are many and they will be elucidated in the course of this pamphlet. Two generalised reasons, however, should be stated at the outset.

The question of unifying the socialist forces in the country is definitely not one of putting forward some 'brilliant' or 'original' definition of socialism or of a schematic elaboration of a socialist pattern suited to Indian conditions. Nor can it be solved by someone or the other insisting that this or that is the only correct path that will lead the country to the cherished goal.

Modern socialism is a science. It is an international science. Developed in Europe in the nineteenth century its roots lie in the irreconcilable conflict between the modern working class in countries all over the world and the international bourgeoisie.

The science was not born in secluded academic circles divorced from the revolutionary struggles of the working class to overthrow capitalist rule and abolish all exploitation. It was born and grew in the very thick of such struggles as a guide to mass action for the achievement of socialism.

This is borne out by the life and work of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, and of Lenin who developed it further in the epoch of imperialism and socialist revolutions.

During the course of its development scientific socialism absorbed and enriched the most advanced theories in the sphere of philosophy, economics and socialism inherited from the past.

With the further development of nineteenth-century capitalism into monopoly capitalism, scientific socialism linked up the revolutionary working-class movement with the struggles of the peasantry for the abolition of feudal exploitation and with the national-liberation struggle of the countries under foreign colonial rule.

Today it offers us the most advanced and effective guidance for the world struggle for peace, democracy and

national independence and for the actual construction of socialism in countries where the toiling people achieve political power.

It is inevitable that in the course of its development and its struggle to unify all genuinely socialist movements and thought currents, scientific socialism should have had to contend, not only against political, economic and ideological doctrines of various reactionary and exploiting classes, but also against utopian and pseudo-scientific theories of socialism, as also reformist and dogmatist departures from scientific socialism.

Naturally, in India also, there is no short-cut, no magical 'open sesame', to the objective of unifying the political parties and groups who are sincere and serious about the abolition of class exploitation and the achievement of socialism.

Such a unification will surely come about. But the path lies through constant mass struggles, struggles of the working class, the peasantry, and other oppressed sections of the people, struggles for economic and general democratic demands, struggles for partial and basic demands, and so on. It lies through the skilful combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activity.

A consistent struggle against the efforts of the imperialist powers to regain their political and economic stranglehold over our country, and serious efforts to fraternise with the international forces fighting against imperialism, are a vital necessity.

Wherever it takes place, imperialist aggression must be resisted and world peace defended.

And together with all such activities a fraternal dialogue between all political parties fighting to defend the common people, for the purpose of applying the principles of scientific socialism to the concrete conditions of India, is also very necessary.

It is the experience gained through all these activities that will unify the genuine forces of socialism in India.

Besides, such experience is altogether indispensable for working out the peculiarities of our specific path to socialism, determined by our particular historical conditions and traditions. Lenin said that all countries will achieve socialism, that its essential content will be the same all over the world, but the path pursued by each country will have certain distinguishing features.

This is much more so in a vast country like ours, with all its complications arising from the diversities of race, religion and language, of stages of historical development ranging from the primitive tribes to the modern working class, and the fact that Indian cultural traditions, both good and bad, have an unbroken continuity of four thousand years.

Of course, this does not mean that all those and all the political parties who have accepted socialism as their goal are going to be united by and in the course of experience.

Socialism has such a powerful appeal today that even parties pursuing an unquestionably capitalist path of development also find it 'useful' to accept it as a label.

As has been so often said, nineteen years of congress rule in India have led to the rich growing richer and the poor, poorer, or at any rate, remaining where they stood before. By no stretch of imagination can such a path of development lead to socialism, even at the point of eternity, Avadi and the resolution of Parliament notwithstanding.

No serious person can believe that the congress leadership and hundreds of prominent congressmen cannot see this reality. No amount of learning through life can, therefore, bring them to socialism. There will be exceptions to the rule, as to any. However, the mass of people who still support the Congress, as also thousands of active congressmen can and will make the turn.