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*Theoretical Journal of the Central Committee  
Of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*

- **Against Pragmatism**  
Bourgeois Philosophy  
"Made in U.S.A."
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And the Prospects for Revolution  
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# Against Pragmatism

## Bourgeois Philosophy

### “Made in U.S.A.”

J.S.

The *Programme* of the Revolutionary Communist Party, in speaking of the degeneration of the American Communist Party in the late 1930s, states:

“In this situation the Communist Party fell into pragmatism, an American ruling class philosophy which says, ‘It is not really possible to know the laws which govern nature and society; if something seems to work, never mind the reasons, do it.’ This leads straight to revisionism which proclaims, ‘The movement is everything, the final aim nothing.’”  
(p. 68)

Why is pragmatism characterized here as a specifically *American* ruling class philosophy? How does it grow out of the particular contradictions of U.S. capitalism? Is pragmatism, on the other hand, related to other ruling class philosophies which have sprouted out of the development of modern imperialism? Just how is pragmatism opposed to Marxism? And how is pragmatism related to the activities and outlook of the Menshevik-splitters who recently attempted to wreck the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA?

This article will attempt to answer these questions, as well as to give a more precise characterization of pragmatism as a philosophy and its role in the class struggle, specifically in the ideological realm and in its relationship to the practical struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Pragmatism is the philosophy of U.S. imperialism. As such, it has had an extremely pernicious effect whenever it has gained influence within the working class and communist movements. Examples of such effects will be found in the old Communist Party, USA, and in the activities of the revisionist headquarters recently defeated in the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

## WHAT IS PRAGMATISM?

Pragmatism as a philosophical doctrine was first formulated by the American philosopher, physicist and mathematician Charles Sanders Peirce (pronounced "purse") in the 1870s. Taking off from a use of the term "pragmatic belief" by the 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant (who will reappear briefly below), Peirce propounded what he called the *pragmatic theory of meaning*. His original statement of the theory goes as follows: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."<sup>1</sup>

Now this may sound, at first, similar to Marxism. Isn't he saying that practice is primary, that there can be no knowledge apart from practice, that theory and practice are intimately related, etc.? Well, he is making a close link between theory and practice, but it takes more than this to arrive at the Marxist theory of knowledge and truth.

What Peirce is saying is that the whole concept of a thing can be identified with the total effects which that thing has. In other words, the thing = its effects. He goes on to give an example of what he means. What, he asks, does it mean to call something *hard*? He answers:

"Evidently that it will not be scratched by many other substances. The whole conception of this quality, as of every other, lies in its conceived effects. There is absolutely no difference between a hard thing and a soft thing so long as they are not brought to the test. Suppose, then, that a diamond could be crystallized in the midst of a cushion of soft cotton, and should remain there until it was finally burned up. Would it be false to say that the diamond was soft? . . . Reflection will show that the reply is this: there would be no *falsity* in such modes of speech. They would involve a modification of our present usage of speech with regard to the words hard and soft, but not of their meanings. For they represent no fact to be different from what it is; only they involve arrangements of facts which would be exceedingly maladroit [awkward]. This leads us to remark that the question of what would occur under circumstances which do not actually arise is not a question of fact, but only of the most perspicuous [clear or fitting] arrangement of them."<sup>2</sup>

There is no difference between something hard and something soft unless they are "brought to the test." A thing is reduced to its effects; a quality is reduced to its manifestations. What this amounts to is what is called in philosophy *phenomenalism*—the doctrine that human thought can only grasp the appearances of things (the phenomena), whereas the reality, the essence, remains beyond our reach.

If a thing does not manifest a quality through actual effects, then you can either say that the thing has the quality or that it doesn't—both will be equally true. The only criterion involved is the "arrangement of facts." What Peirce means is that with regard to this particular diamond, which had never come into contact with anything (other than cotton) and hence had never manifested the quality of hardness, if you were to say that it was soft, while other diamonds (which had actually scratched something)<sup>3</sup> were hard, then this would be a "maladroit," an awkward, arrangement of facts. So, in order to have a graceful arrangement, you might as well say that this cotton-swathed diamond too is hard.

Such were the beginnings of pragmatism. But it did not become a powerful force in the world of ideas for another twenty years after this essay, and the person who became its most well-known exponent was not Peirce himself but his friend, the Harvard philosopher and psychologist William James. After James began to use the term, it was taken up in a widespread way both within academic philosophy and among intellectuals in general. As James noted at the end of 1906,

"The word 'pragmatism' spread, and at present it fairly spots the pages of the philosophic journals. On all hands we find the 'pragmatic movement' spoken of. . . . It is evident that the term applies itself conveniently to a number of tendencies that hitherto have lacked a collective name, and that it has 'come to stay.'"<sup>4</sup>

This last statement is certainly true (except in the broadest historical sense). Although pragmatism found expression as a whole explicit philosophy in the writings of academics, their writings simply crystallized a widespread tendency of thought. Like all theory, in fact, pragmatism had a basis in social practice. And the practice that it summed up (though of course not scientifically), as we shall see, was that of the U.S. bourgeoisie as it consolidated its rule and moved into the monopoly stage of capitalism in the period between the Civil War and World War I.

James insisted that pragmatism was not a set of doctrines, but a method, which he explained as follows:

"The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable. Is the world one or many?—fated or free?—material or spiritual?—here are notions either of which may or may not hold good of the world; and disputes over such notions are unending. The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle."<sup>5</sup>

According to James, then, pragmatism is primarily a method for dealing with philosophical disputes. As we shall see later, it is more than this, but let us look at it first in the terms which James lays down. What results does pragmatism have when applied to philosophical questions?

One of the most basic and important philosophical disputes is that between materialism and idealism. What result does pragmatism give in this case? For James, this question posed itself as a choice between materialism on the one hand and "spiritualism" or theism on the other. And on the question of whether matter is primary, or whether God or some spiritual force is the ultimate thing in the universe, the pragmatic method, says James, offers a clear result; it shows that the difference between materialism and "spiritualism" comes down to the following.

"[Materialism is] not a permanent warrant for our more ideal interests, not a fulfiller of our remotest hopes.

"The notion of God, on the other hand, . . . has at least this practical superiority . . . , that it guarantees an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved . . . . Materialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the cutting off of ultimate hopes; spiritualism means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope."<sup>6</sup>

This same theme is developed by James in one of his most famous essays, "The Will To Believe," in which he argues that, from the point of view of philosophy and general intellectual rigor, we have the "right to believe" in religion.<sup>7</sup> For Peirce also, one of

the important things about pragmatism was that it allowed for the possibility of religious belief. As one scholar writing about Peirce notes, "Although he opposed dogmatic theology vigorously, he was equally opposed to any philosophy which closed the door on religion."<sup>8</sup> And Peirce himself, defending the pragmatic theory of meaning, makes a revealing remark: "It has been said to be a sceptical and materialistic principle. But it is only an application of the sole principle of logic which was recommended by Jesus; 'Ye may know them by their fruits', and it is very intimately allied with the ideas of the gospel."<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, this religious-justification theme, this *fideism* (belief in faith as prior and superior to reason), was so pronounced in the beginnings of pragmatism that French writer Anatole France was led to say that "Just lately pragmatism has been invented for the express purpose of gaining credit for religion in the minds of rationalists."<sup>10</sup>

John Dewey (1859-1952), the next major continuator of pragmatism in philosophy, smoothed over the crudeness of many of James' formulations, while at the same time not basically altering the essence of the philosophical position. This was no less true in the case of religion than in other areas. What he wanted, Dewey said, was a "religious attitude" which

" . . . would surrender once for all commitment to beliefs about matters of fact, whether physical, social or metaphysical. It would leave such matters to inquirers in other fields. Nor would it substitute in their place fixed beliefs about values . . . ."<sup>11</sup>

What would be left would be "the religious attitude as a sense of the possibilities of existence and as devotion to the cause of these possibilities . . . ."<sup>12</sup>

So pragmatism shows a constant inclination for religion, and this may well lead us to think that it must be a form of idealism rather than materialism. And indeed this will prove to be correct. But before going on to show just how it constitutes idealism, and how it relates to other trends in bourgeois philosophy, let us look more closely at how it presents itself.

We have seen that Peirce introduced pragmatism as a theory of the meaning of concepts. James developed it into a general method for settling "metaphysical," or philosophical, disputes. Further, James introduced a pragmatic *theory of truth*, which takes us to the most basic level of the meaning of pragmatism. This is how James explains it in some famous passages from his 1907 lectures on pragmatism:

"True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot. That is the practical difference it makes for us to have true ideas. . . . Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events."<sup>13</sup>

So if only verifiable ideas are true, and truth "happens" to an idea, then the process of verification must be the process whereby an idea actually becomes true (and in fact James draws this conclusion in the next sentence of this passage). In other words, there is no such thing as something's being true before it is found out to be true. In fact James is saying that there is no such thing as "finding out" that something is true. For the process of verifying an idea is actually the process whereby the idea becomes true—whereby truth "happens to" the idea.

But what, then, does it mean to verify an idea? For James, it simply means that the consequences of believing the idea are generally *useful* and *advantageous*. Thus he says:

"You can say of it then either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful'. Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely that there is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified. . . . When a moment in our experience, of any kind whatever, inspires us with a thought that is true, that means that sooner or later we dip by that thought's guidance into the particulars of experience again and make advantageous connexion with them. . . . 'The true', to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course. . . ."<sup>14</sup>

Ideas are true when the consequences of believing them are in the long run and on the whole *useful*. Truth = expediency.

These rather bald statements provoked a storm of controversy following the publication of James' book, and other pragmatists hastened to dissociate themselves from the obvious crudity of his position. As one writer puts it:

"Peirce dubbed James' doctrine 'suicidal' and rebaptized his own philosophy as 'pragmaticism'. . . . Dewey also dissociated himself

from James on this matter. He disclaimed the notion that truth is what gives satisfaction. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

Peirce preferred to say that "the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth. . . ." and that if belief "were to tend indefinitely toward absolute fixity," we would have truth.<sup>16</sup> But, it might well be objected to this, as one scholar did object,

"What pragmatic meaning can be attributed to notions such as 'absolute fixity' or 'the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to'? One would imagine that these concepts, too, would be unacceptable. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

(On closer examination, however, it seems that Peirce's position is much the same as James'. It is obvious that "ultimate agreement" and "absolute fixity" of belief will not be upon us until the end of time. But what are we to do in the meantime? If ultimate truth consists in ultimate agreement and absolute fixity of belief, then provisional truth, or truth in the meantime, must consist in provisional agreement and relative fixity of belief. So truth would be general agreement and fixity of belief. In order for this to be the same as James' position, all that is necessary is the additional assumption that what will bring about such agreement or fixity with regard to an idea is that it is useful or advantageous. And in fact Peirce was forced to admit, in some of his unpublished manuscripts, that he was actually uncomfortably close to James' position.<sup>18</sup>

The case of Dewey is even clearer. Whereas Peirce shrinks from accepting the full consequences of pragmatism, Dewey not only accepts these consequences but expands pragmatism even further, into a broad general theory. At the same time, however, he seeks to soften the harshness of James' crude statements. Even though expressed in Dewey's characteristic mush-like prose style, however, the essence of his doctrine of truth remains the same as that expressed by James.

Dewey's doctrine of truth is very consistent throughout his long career. Thus in 1903 he holds that the test of the validity of an idea is "its functional or instrumental use in effecting the transition from a relatively conflicting experience to a relatively integrated one."<sup>19</sup> In 1916 his explanation of "the traditional theory of truth as a correspondence or agreement of existence and mind or thought" is that the correspondence or agreement here is "like that between an invention and the conditions which the invention is intended to meet."<sup>20</sup> In 1920 he says:

"The hypothesis that works is the *true* one; and *truth* is an abstract noun applied to the collection of cases, actual, foreseen and desired, that receive confirmation in their works and consequences."

He goes on to say that truth can be defined as "satisfaction," and

"... the satisfaction in question means a satisfaction of the needs and conditions out of which the idea, the purpose and method of action, arises... [And] truth as utility means service in making just that contribution to reorganization in experience that the idea or theory claims to be able to make."<sup>21</sup>

In 1929 it is:

"The test of the validity of any particular intellectual conception, measurement or enumeration is functional, its use in making possible the institution of interactions which yield results in control of actual experiences of observed objects... We know whenever we do know; that is, whenever our inquiry leads to conclusions which settle the problem out of which it grew."<sup>22</sup>

And finally, in 1938 he reaffirms his pragmatism, in the sense of affirming

"... the function of consequences as necessary tests of the validity of propositions, *provided* these consequences are operationally instituted and are such as to resolve the specific problem evoking the operations..."<sup>23</sup>

What is Dewey saying in all these places? He is saying that ideas or theories come up out of certain needs, conditions, problems, and that an idea or theory is true if it "settles the problem" or "satisfies the needs and conditions" which gave rise to it. A theory is true if it solves your problems. In other words, it's true if it's useful. Truth = expediency.<sup>24</sup>

Now of course Dewey is very insistent that satisfaction doesn't mean some emotional or purely personal satisfaction, nor does utility mean useful to me alone, or useful at the moment, or useful for the purpose of private ambition or personal gain.<sup>25</sup> And in evaluating pragmatism we should keep away from the caricature

to which it easily lends itself. Usefulness and expediency do not have to mean something momentary or private. What James and Dewey mean to be talking about is usefulness and expediency in the long run and on the whole. But of course at the same time this does not mean that they are any less talking about usefulness and expediency. In fact they are, as we shall see, denying objective truth and making truth dependent on its general usefulness and expediency to a certain class—the bourgeoisie—which they represent.

Where, then, have we arrived? We have seen that pragmatism is not only a theory of meaning, and not only an alleged method for resolving philosophical disputes, but is also and most basically a theory of truth. It is the theory that ideas are true if they are useful, or in other words if they accomplish the goal or task which they were meant to accomplish. Underlying this theory of truth is the notion that ideas are *instruments*, and indeed Dewey's doctrine is often called "instrumentalism." An instrument has some job that it is supposed to perform, and if it performs it well, then it's a good instrument—or in the case of ideas a true idea. Ideas, in other words, do not correspond to reality, but rather they are instruments for dealing with reality; if they are useful in dealing with reality, then we call them "true."

What this means is that it is impossible to describe the world, impossible to actually grasp reality in thought. We may think that's what we're doing, but according to pragmatism what we are actually doing is the following: we interact with the world; in the process of interaction, ideas and theories are generated in our minds; these ideas are used in further interactions with the world; if they prove useful in these interactions then they are true; the more the interactions in which they prove useful, the more the ideas or theories are validated or confirmed.

### WHAT IS WRONG WITH PRAGMATISM?

While, again, this may superficially sound like Marxism, it should be clear by this point that pragmatism differs fundamentally from Marxism. For Marxism holds that it is definitely possible to describe and understand the world, to grasp the nature of reality—in all its complex interrelations and constant change—in thought. For Marxism, an idea is not true because it is useful; rather, it is useful because it is true. And truth does not mean "instrumental usefulness," "the expedient in the way of our thinking," or any such stuff; truth means the correspondence of our ideas with reality (more on this below).

But not only is pragmatism un-Marxist, it is also profoundly anti-Marxist. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as

capitalism moved into the stage of imperialism, bourgeois ideology underwent a change as well. This change in ideology corresponded, of course, to the changes in economic structure which were brought about by the movement of capitalism into the stage of imperialism. One important area of ideology is philosophy, which is the general world-view and method of thinking which characterize an ideology. Throughout the capitalist world at the turn of the century there arose a relatively new type of bourgeois philosophy, which is known in general as *positivism*. This general philosophy has taken on different forms in different places and at different times over the course of the 20th century, but it has always remained, in all its different forms, the predominant bourgeois philosophy in the era of imperialism. And pragmatism is simply one particular form of positivism.

One of the first forms of positivism was that developed by the Austrian physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach and (independently) by the German philosopher Richard Avenarius, who called this philosophy "empirio-criticism." In the period between the 1905 revolution in Russia and World War 1, this bourgeois viewpoint began to have some influence within the Bolshevik Party, particularly through the medium of A.A. Bogdanov and his supporters, who had joined the Bolsheviks in 1905. To combat this influence, and to reaffirm the philosophy of dialectical materialism in the light of the developments in natural science since the death of Engels, Lenin wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy* in 1908. At one point in this book Lenin makes the following remark about pragmatism, noting its close affinity with the philosophy he is combatting:

"Perhaps the 'latest fashion' in the latest American philosophy is 'pragmatism' (from the Greek word 'pragma'—action; that is, a philosophy of action). The philosophical journals speak perhaps more of pragmatism than of anything else. Pragmatism ridicules the metaphysics both of materialism and idealism, acclaims experience and only experience, recognizes practice as the only criterion, refers to the positivist movement in general, especially turns for support to Ostwald, Mach, Pearson, Poincare and Duhem, for the belief that science is not an 'absolute copy of reality' and...and successfully deduces from all this a God for practical purposes, and only for practical purposes, without any metaphysics, and without transcending the bounds of experience (cf. William James, *Pragmatism*. A

*New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, New York and London, 1907, pp. 57 and 106 especially). From the standpoint of materialism the difference between Machism and pragmatism is as insignificant and unimportant as the difference between empirio-criticism and empirio-monism."<sup>26</sup>

In other words, there is no difference between Machism and pragmatism in the respect that they are not only both forms of bourgeois ideology in general, but also forms of positivism in particular. Lenin is saying that in respect of being anti-materialist, and in fact leading to the support of religion, clericalism and fideism, the distinctions between these different forms of positivism at that time were insignificant. But there are particularities about pragmatism, and there are reasons why positivism assumed the form of Machism and empirio-criticism in Europe and the form of pragmatism in the United States. In fact, just as positivism is the philosophy of the bourgeoisie in the era of imperialism in general, so pragmatism is the philosophy of *American imperialism*, of U.S. capitalism in the highest stage of capitalism.

Let us look, then, at positivism, at just how it is an anti-Marxist philosophy, and at the relationship of pragmatism to it. This will be the task of the present section of this article. Then succeeding sections will look into what is distinctive about pragmatism and what its relation is to U.S. imperialism.

The originator of the word "positivism" was Saint-Simon, one of the "three great Utopians" about whom Engels wrote in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Saint-Simon used "positivism" to designate what he took to be scientific method and its extension to philosophy. This concept and term was taken over and formed into a philosophical system by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), pupil and secretary of Saint-Simon for seven years. Several theses appear with Comte which will continue to be characteristic of positivism: (a) the claim to be above and beyond the "metaphysical" systems of idealism and materialism; (b) the thesis that valid knowledge can only be gained through science, and that what this means is that facts are the only possible objects of knowledge; (c) the contention that the job of philosophy is to find the underlying principles of the "positive" sciences and use these as a basis for the organization of society; and (d) the view that reality undergoes a smooth, progressive evolution.

In fact, despite its claims to be beyond such things, positivism has been consistently idealist, as well as metaphysical in the Marxist sense (that is, undialectical). With Comte this idealism is fairly blatant. He opens his most well-known work, *Cours de Philosophie*

*Positive*, with a straight-out identification of human progress with "the progressive course of the human mind," and near the end says: "It cannot be necessary to prove to anybody who reads this work that Ideas govern the world, or throw it into chaos. . . ."27

Comte's conservatism is also rather straight-out. Writing in 1851, three years after a wave of revolutionary upsurge had swept across Europe, and also three years after Marx and Engels had written that the spectre of communism was haunting Europe, Comte offers positivism as ". . . the only doctrine which can preserve Western Europe from some serious attempt to bring communism into practical operation."<sup>28</sup> Comte does not put himself forward, however, as a simple partisan of the capitalists. Rather, he claims to mediate, from a neutral position, between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Concerning the view that the possessor of property (in other words the capitalist) has an absolute right to do whatever he wants with that property he says: "The instinctive objection of workmen to this view is shared by all true philosophers."<sup>29</sup>

But he does not want to do away with private property. Not at all. He simply wants the capitalists to moderate their greed and realize that their ownership gives them certain social responsibilities. He then reassures the capitalist:

"This is the only tenable view of property, and wisely interpreted, it is one that, while enabling to its possessor, does not exclude a due measure of freedom. It will in fact place his position on a firmer basis than ever."<sup>30</sup>

In other words, he is telling the capitalists that in order to put capitalism on a firmer basis, certain reforms must be made. Indeed, as Comte revealingly remarks, "It will not . . . be difficult to show that all the characteristics of positivism are summed up in its motto, *Order and Progress* . . ."<sup>31</sup> The existing order can only be preserved through continuous changes and adjustments in it—and this, for the positivist, is progress.

But before leaving Comte, it is impossible not to note his final devastating blow against proletarian ideology:

"There is another point in which communism is equally inconsistent with the laws of sociology. Acting under false views of the constitution of our modern industrial system, it proposes to remove its directors, who form so essential a part of it."<sup>32</sup>

In this regard, the following remarks of Marx are to the point:

"It is not because he is a leader of industry that a man is a capitalist; on the contrary, he is a leader of industry because he is a capitalist. The leadership of industry is an attribute of capital, just as in feudal times the functions of general and judge, were attributes of landed property. (Auguste Comte and his school might therefore have shown that feudal lords are an eternal necessity in the same way that they have done in the case of the lords of capital.)"<sup>33</sup>

Positivism continued to develop throughout the 19th century. Eugen Duhring, against whom Engels' famous polemic was directed, can in certain ways be classified as a positivist. So can Herbert Spencer, the British philosopher who claimed to base himself upon the new theory of evolution and who strongly defended laissez-faire capitalism on the basis of what came to be called "social Darwinism" (the doctrine that the capitalist struggle for survival in society will lead to the "survival of the fittest" just as in nature, so that government should not interfere to save the "unfit").

Positivism reached its maturity in the work of Mach and Avenarius, mentioned above. These thinkers held that *facts* are the only reality. But for them, facts are defined as *complexes of sensations*. A sensation is simply the result of sensing something—in other words, what happens in us as a result of using the five senses. But these internal happenings in us constitute the only building-blocks of facts, and facts constitute reality. The result, as Mach explicitly says, is that ". . . the world consists only of our sensations."<sup>34</sup>

In the division of reality into ideas and matter, sensations would have to be categorized as ideas. For they are the result in our minds of the action of the external objective world on our sense organs. For a materialist, sensations are ideas (though not fully formed or rational ideas) which arise out of the interaction of our bodies and bodily organs with the material world around us. Sensations are products of, and derivative from, the material world. But these positivists are saying just the opposite: "the world consists only of our sensations." That is to say, the world consists of our ideas. This is why Lenin justly summed up the "empirio-criticism" of Mach and Avenarius as nothing but pure Berkeleyan idealism—that is, an idealism like that of George Berkeley, the 18th-century British bishop, who held that nothing exists except minds and their ideas, and who used this supposed fact to "prove" the existence of God.<sup>35</sup>

Mach was himself a physicist, and one of the objects of his philosophy was to try to show that physics, and all science, is bas-

ed upon sensations. Scientific laws, he said, merely state general relations among sensations, and scientific theories are simply devices to help us predict future sensations. For example, this was his attitude toward atoms:

“He steadfastly refused to believe in the existence of the physical atoms of modern atomic theory; if anyone found their postulation useful for predicting further phenomena, he was entitled to use them, but anyone would be equally entitled to use any other device which gave the same predictions.”<sup>36</sup>

In other words, Mach was trying to put science on an idealist, rather than a materialist, basis. Thus we can see that positivism's emphasis on *science*, its thesis that knowledge can be gained only through science, just like its insistence upon grounding everything in “facts” and “experience,” is actually nothing but a semi-concealed sort of idealism. For it turns out that they have already reinterpreted experience, facts, and science in a purely idealist manner.

But if the positivists are actually idealists, how is it that they can claim to have risen “above” both materialism and idealism? The trick is just that sensations are regarded as “neutral” building-blocks, out of which both the mental world and the physical world are composed. Mind and matter are made of the same stuff, which is itself supposed to be neither mental nor material. This is perhaps the shoddiest bit of sleight-of-hand in the whole positivistic set-up—by mere fiat they declare that these *ideas* which form the starting point of their whole world-view are to be regarded as neither mental nor material!

It should be clear by now what is the essential defect in positivism from the point of view of science in the fullest, most comprehensive sense—that is, of Marxism. It is idealist—and it is not just idealism, but *subjective* idealism as well—that is, it presents truth and the objective world as the product of the particular person's (or subject's) mind, proceeding by the same method as Berkeley, who was only able to arrive at objective idealism through the intervention—or invention—of God. Remember Mach's statement that “the world consists only of our sensations.” But, asks one writer, “By what right does Mach say that the world is *our* sensations rather than *my* sensations? Does his view not lead inevitably to solipsism?”<sup>37</sup> Solipsism is the doctrine that nothing exists except me—obviously not a position which anyone intends to hold, but one toward which bourgeois philosophers are often driven because of the individualism and subjectivism which infects, indeed characterizes, the bourgeois

world outlook.

Much attempts to escape solipsism by the device, familiar to philosophers, of the “argument from analogy”—I observe connections between my outer behavior and my inner experience, and then I infer, by analogy, that there must be “other minds” with similar inner experience because I can observe other instances of similar outer behavior. But there are many objections to this line of argumentation which are also familiar to philosophers—while the “common man” will spontaneously reject this kind of convoluted reasoning as unnecessary to establish the obvious fact that other people and things exist besides oneself. The essential point, though, is that positivism's viewpoint is inherently subjective because it starts out from, and bases itself on, subjective inner experience; everything starts from the individual mind and its sensations. It then inherently faces the problem of breaking out of this self-contained world of ideas and of somehow establishing the existence of the outer world and of other minds. This is why it is called subjective idealism. This is in contrast to the objective idealism of someone like Hegel, who also holds that ideas are primary—not, however, the ideas in an individual mind, but ideas which are somehow objective, existing apart from the individual. Another good example of objective idealism are religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc., which believe that the primary reality and starting point is a god, which is supposed to be a purely spiritual, nonmaterial entity.

The characteristics of the positivism of Mach and Avenarius which have been outlined here continued to characterize positivism, from Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein in England, to Carnap, Schlick and other members of the Vienna Circle in Austria, to Reichenbach in Germany, to Tarski in Poland, to all the other positivists in Europe and America. What the “logical positivism” of this century, as represented by the above people, has added has been a somewhat increased sophistication and a stress on logic and language.

Likewise it is clear that there is an essential continuity between positivism and pragmatism. First, let us remember Peirce's phenomenalism. He held that the only thing we can sum up in our ideas and concepts are the phenomena, the *effects* of things, and not the essence, not the thing itself. All that we need do is identify these effects with sensations, and pretend that they are neither mental nor material, and we arrive exactly at Machism.

With James the parallel is even clearer. He professed a doctrine which he called “radical empiricism,” and in one of his essays on this topic he put it this way:

“My thesis is that if we start from the supposition



that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience', then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter."<sup>38</sup>

Here is precisely the same attempt to escape from the opposition of materialism *vs.* idealism, an attempt which nonetheless lands the thinker head-first in idealism. James' "pure experience," just like Mach's "sensations," is supposed to be neither mental nor material, but neutral between the two.\*

But this "pure experience" is so obviously something inner, something happening within the human mind, a stream of ideas, to which material reality is to be *reduced*, that it is difficult to see how it could be missed that this philosophy is a form of subjective idealism. And indeed James himself pretty well gives the game away when he points out that his forerunners in this outlook are none but the explicit subjective idealist Berkeley and his predecessors, and that "... the conception I am defending does little more than consistently carry out the 'pragmatic' method which they were the first to use."<sup>39</sup> Earlier he had said, in an even more explicit admission:

"Berkeley's criticism of 'matter' was... absolutely pragmatistic. Matter is known as our sensations of colour, figure, hardness and the like. They are the cash-value of the term... These sensations then are its sole meaning. Berkeley doesn't deny matter, then; he simply tells us what it consists of. It is a true name for just so much in the way of sensations."<sup>40</sup>

And finally, it is hard to leave this topic without one more revealing quotation, this one from an interview with James published in the *New York Times*:

"Our minds are not here simply to copy a reality that is already complete. They are here to complete it, to add to its importance by their own remodeling of it, to decant its contents over, so to speak, into a more significant shape."<sup>41</sup>

\*In fact at this time this general sort of doctrine, which enjoyed wide popularity among bourgeois philosophers, came to be called "neutral monism."

Dewey is, as usual, much less blatant. He would never be so crude as to hold up Berkeley as his own prototype. In fact, Dewey takes great pains to say that he is *not* an idealist. Of course he also takes pains to point out (this time truly) that he is not a materialist either. His stance is that both idealism and materialism bring out some valuable points, but each is too extreme, too one-sided.<sup>42</sup> In other words, his is the by now familiar claim to be "beyond" both materialism and idealism.

And, as it always is, this pretense of going beyond both is actually a ploy, a cover to hide the fact that what Dewey embraces is nothing but idealism. But let us see how this works out in his writings.

He says that "modern idealistic theories of knowledge have displayed some sense of the method and objective of science."<sup>43</sup> This is because "... they have framed a theory of the constitutive operation of mind in the determination of real objects."<sup>44</sup> In other words, Dewey here pays homage to subjective idealism for its thesis that the mind makes reality, and he actually identifies this subjectivism as having something to do with the "method and objective of science"!

Dewey then goes on to try to pull away from a total identification with idealism:

"But idealism, while it has had an intimation of the constructively instrumental office of intelligence, has mistranslated the discovery... That is, it took re-constitution to be constitution; re-construction to be construction."<sup>45</sup>

That is—the mind *helps* to construct reality, or it "re-constructs" reality, but it doesn't do the whole job.

In other words, what Dewey wants to pull off is a kind of *Kantianism*. The most basic point of Kant's philosophy was his distinction between appearances, or phenomena, on the one hand, and things-in-themselves, or "noumena," on the other. Kant held that the thing-in-itself was inherently unknowable, because the human mind, in its interaction with the things themselves, molds things in accordance with certain innate categories of the mind. The appearances or phenomena which result from this interaction thus bear the imprint of the mind as well as of the things-in-themselves. But these phenomena are the objects of human knowledge. Hence we cannot know things as they actually are, but only as they have been "re-constructed" by the mind.

It should be apparent that this is actually a form of idealism. And indeed Kant recognized this fact, calling his philosophy "transcendental idealism." But Dewey wants to pretend that this

same sort of view is somehow above and beyond the opposition of materialism and idealism. He wants to say that "... while the theory that life, feeling and thought are never independent of physical events may be deemed materialism, it may also be considered just the opposite," and that

"Nothing but unfamiliarity stands in the way of thinking of both mind and matter as different characters of natural events, in which matter expresses their sequential order, and mind the order of their meanings in their logical connections and dependencies."<sup>46</sup>

But despite Dewey's slippery attempts to claim a middle way, he can be pinned down and shown up for the idealist he certainly is.

All of the quotations from Dewey on the last couple of pages have come from his book *Experience and Nature*, in which he shows himself very sensitive to the charge of being an idealist, and tries to avoid formulations which will make him appear so. His main tool in this is a muddy, obfuscating style of writing, through which he tries to befog his true meaning. A few years later, however, in *The Quest for Certainty*, he allows himself to be more straight-forward. His main object in this book, in fact, is to polemicize against the idea that knowledge is a "disclosure of antecedent reality." In other words, his main point is to emphasize the "creativity" of the human mind, how the mind shapes reality and doesn't just "disclose" a reality which already exists. There is not the space here to examine how Dewey argues for this and what the fallacies in his arguments are. Here I just want to note some formulations which at least disclose the reality of Dewey's idealism.

First, what is it that we know? What is the object of knowledge? Dewey answers: "... the object of knowledge is a constructed, existentially produced, object."<sup>47</sup> That is, what we know is not the world itself, but something "constructed"—by us.

And, second, what is it that the human mind does? Dewey answers this question in speaking of "mathematico-physical conceptions," of which he says:

"In short, they do the business that all thinking and objects of thought have to effect: they connect, through relevant operations, the discontinuities of individualized observations and experiences into continuity with one another. Their validity is a matter of their efficacy in performance of this function; it is tested by results and not by correspondence

with antecedent properties of existence."<sup>48</sup>

Here we can see the connection with the pragmatic theory of truth. The validity of a scientific theory or concept is determined by whether it works, by how well it performs its function. And what is this function? It is to connect the discontinuous experiences of individuals. In other words: the starting point of Dewey's philosophy is the disconnected mish-mash of "experiences" which each individual has. Out of these atomistic building-blocks the mind must create an integrated and continuous whole which will be reality.

Let us compare this with Mach, for whom, as we saw above, "scientific laws merely state general relations among sensations, and scientific theories are simply devices to help us predict future sensations." Just substitute Dewey's "experiences" for Mach's "sensations" and you have an essentially similar view. And these "experiences" are just as much something private and inner, just as much subjective ideas, as are Mach's sensations. What it comes down to in both cases is that the human mind is locked within the circle of its own ideas and creates reality out of them: subjective idealism.

In fact, pragmatism is *bound* to lead to this. Remember that pragmatism's basic doctrine is that ideas are true if they are useful instruments for dealing with reality. But this means that truth is created by the usefulness of ideas—which is to say that reality is created out of ideas.

We have seen, then, that pragmatism is a species of positivism, and that the essential thing about positivism from a scientific Marxist point of view is that it is a system of subjective idealism. The distinctiveness of positivism, as compared to other systems of subjective idealism, lies in the four points outlined earlier: (a) the claim to be above both materialism and idealism; (b) the thesis that valid knowledge can only be gained through science; (c) the contention that the job of philosophy is to find the underlying principles of the "positive" sciences and use these as a basis for the organization of society; and (d) the view that reality undergoes a smooth, progressive evolution. I have not devoted equal attention to all of these four points so far, and there are variations in the case of individual thinkers in their adherence to these various aspects of positivism. Speaking of the pragmatists, James, for example, shows little interest in pursuing (c), and it is unclear to what extent he would adhere to (d). And Dewey, on the other hand, apparently explicitly rejects (b). But then he does think that science is "...an intensified form of knowledge in which are written large the essential characters of any knowing,"<sup>49</sup> and this amounts, obviously, to much the same thing as (b). On the other hand, as we

will see in the next section, Dewey is particularly strong in the emphasis he gives to (c). The point is that these four are elements which are characteristic of positivism, not arguments which all positivists necessarily hold to.

If these, then, mark the distinctiveness of positivism, what constitutes the distinctiveness of pragmatism? Essentially it is its emphasis on human will, activity, striving and practice. Its theory of knowledge is active rather than the passive and contemplative theory typical of other positivists like Russell, the early Wittgenstein, or Carnap. This emphasis on human activity and practice, which are variable and changing, leads pragmatism to the effective denial of any stable underlying structure to reality, and consequently to the denial in practice of any stable laws which would express this structure. And this leads, in turn, to that general contempt for theory which is so characteristic of pragmatism.

The emphasis which pragmatism puts on these two points—namely (a) the changingness of reality and (b) human practice—leads it to exhibit a superficial similarity to Marxism, and this has led more than one opportunist or anti-Marxist to identify the two. Bertrand Russell, the British positivist, for instance, claims that “allowing for a certain difference of phraseology, [Marx’s] doctrine is essentially indistinguishable from [Dewey’s] instrumentalism.”<sup>50</sup>

But, as noted before, the contrast between Marxism and pragmatism is very sharp. Marxists do recognize that reality is constantly changing; to see it as static is part of the metaphysical point of view. But this recognition does not lead Marxism to lose its footing and surrender helplessly to the flow; the dialectical method is precisely the way of grasping reality in its changingness. And when reality is grasped in this way, it becomes clear that there are certain underlying laws of reality which are knowable by the human mind. Reality is constantly changing, but its changes have their inherent laws; reality and its laws are knowable.

Likewise Marxism has always held that, in understanding the world, human practice is primary. As Marx said:

“The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking.”<sup>51</sup>

And as Mao emphasized:

“Marxists hold that man’s social practice alone is

the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world. . . . Only social practice can be the criterion of truth. The standpoint of practice is the primary and basic standpoint in the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge.”<sup>52</sup>

Finally, as Lenin said:

“The standpoint of life, of practice, should be first and fundamental in the theory of knowledge. And it inevitably leads to materialism. . . .”<sup>53</sup>

This last statement by Lenin is exactly to the point at issue here. Marxism holds that human practice (which, further, is essentially *social*, not individual) shows that materialism is correct.<sup>54</sup> Marxism shows that through social practice we can come to know the laws and structure of reality. Pragmatism, on the contrary, says: Forget about objective reality and its laws; concentrate on practice. Whatever happens to work is good enough. If it’s *expedient* in practice, then it’s as good as true—and “expedient in almost any fashion,” in James’ words.

The main point is that pragmatism is from the beginning *idealist*: practice, for the pragmatists, does not lead us to knowledge of an already independently existing reality, but actually creates reality. Remember James’ “Truth happens to an idea.” Remember how for Dewey the mind creates reality out of discontinuous and individualized experiences. As was noted above, for Marxism, an idea is not “true” because it is useful; rather, it is useful because it is true. And the reason for the centrality of practice in the Marxist theory of knowledge is not because it discloses what’s useful, but because it discloses and verifies what’s true—and therefore useful. As Lenin put it,

“Knowledge can be useful . . . in human practice . . . only when it reflects objective truth, truth which is independent of man. For the materialist the ‘success’ of human practice proves the correspondence between our ideas and the objective nature of the things we perceive.”<sup>55</sup>

Ideas arise out of practice; they are further developed through a process of interaction of theory and practice—a process which Mao describes well in “On Practice.” If this process occurs in a scientific manner, if ideas continue to more fully reflect reality, it results in the discovery and deepening grasp of the laws by which the objective world operates. Of course this discovery and deepening

ing grasp, and the statement of the laws, is never final or absolute, but is always being tested in practice and moving forward in a dialectical way to higher levels of truth. Thus true ideas arise out of practice and are tested in practice. Practice is primary and indispensable. But the point of a scientific approach to practice (as opposed to the pragmatists' bastardized view of practice) is to lead to the discovery and use, of course of the laws which underlie reality.

Marx, in a famous statement, stressed that the point was not to interpret the world but to change it. Here, however, Marx did not deny but affirmed the importance of knowing the world to change it—that is grasping and applying the laws that govern it.

Here enters the question of *theory*. The development of scientific truth requires that at a certain stage in the process the leap to the realm of theory take place, and that at certain times and stages theory be developed *in its own right*, as a scientific abstraction of matter, and not simply as an appendage of practice at any given time. As Mao pointed out: "Perception only solves the problem of phenomena; theory alone can solve the problem of essence."<sup>56</sup> Thus the scientific viewpoint, the Marxist viewpoint of dialectical materialism, is very far removed from the vulgar anti-theoretical and "practical" attitude of pragmatism.

But besides this, it always turns out "in practice" that what the pragmatists mean by practice in the final analysis is something ideal or mental. It turns out to be the practice of relating "portions of pure experience" (James) or "experiences" (Dewey) to one another. Pragmatism is idealist from the start.

### THE IDEOLOGICAL MEANING OF PRAGMATISM

The *Programme* of the Revolutionary Communist Party characterizes pragmatism as an American ruling class philosophy. Pragmatism—this peculiar type of subjective idealism—did not fall from the sky. As pointed out earlier, like all ideas, it originated in social practice, and in this case it was the practice of the U.S. bourgeoisie over the last hundred years—although, again, it is not a scientific summation of even that practice. What is distinctive about the period beginning about a hundred years ago for U.S. capitalism is that it is in this period that it has moved forward into the stage of monopoly capitalism, or imperialism. Thus pragmatism is the distinctive philosophy of U.S. monopoly capitalism, of U.S. imperialism.

All the varied and disparate facts about pragmatism fall into place when this, its material base and ideological function, is understood. As a prominent instance, take the constant connection of pragmatism with religion. Why should pragmatism,

idealist though it may be, have any special affinity for religion? Looking just at the logical relation of ideas, the cause of this is very obscure. But as soon as the matter is examined in light of the ideological needs of the U.S. ruling class, it becomes very clear.

Very simply, pragmatism pushes religion because pragmatism is a ruling class ideology; and the bourgeoisie wants to have religion pushed because it helps defend its rule. In the "Introduction to the English Edition" of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* Engels sets himself the task of explaining why the British bourgeoisie was so tied to religion, even at a time when its counterpart on the European continent was anti-religious. His answer is that in England the bourgeoisie was able, by a combination of circumstances, to become a part of the ruling classes of the country at an earlier point than was any bourgeoisie in continental Europe. And when this happened, the British merchant or manufacturer

"... was not long in discovering the opportunities this same religion offered him for working upon the minds of his natural inferiors, and making them submissive to the behests of the masters it pleased God to place over them. In short, the English bourgeoisie now had to take a part in keeping down the 'lower orders', the great producing mass of the nation, and one of the means employed for that purpose was the influence of religion."<sup>57</sup>

Religion has always been a potent weapon which the bourgeoisie has used (borrowing it, as Engels points out, from their feudal predecessors) to spread submissive attitudes among the masses. And academic philosophy in the United States, up through the closing decades of the nineteenth century, had always had as its chief stock in trade various openly theological systems. But by the end of the nineteenth century, religion was coming under sharp attack. Beginning in the 1870s, powerful movements both among the small farmers and among the workers pounded at the capitalists. This was very much connected with the passage of U.S. capitalism into its monopoly stage. As capitalism became more moribund and parasitic, its contradictions became increasingly clear. The working class was pushed hard, and it fought back vigorously through powerful strikes and often violent confrontations with the capitalists and their agents. The petty bourgeoisie (small farmers and small businessmen), so numerous in 19th century America, found itself pressed to the wall, and struck back at the monopoly capitalists through the Populist movement. All this obviously required some adjustments on the part of the ruling class, the evolution of some new tactics.

On the ideological front, the spreading of a doctrine of submission was definitely the order of the day for the ruling class. Religion was the most convenient vehicle, but it had to be refurbished and reinforced.

Now William James was very much aware of this ideological crisis, and in fact he brings it up in a very straight-forward way. The opening chapter of his most famous book, *Pragmatism*, is called "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy," and in it he quotes from a pamphlet which he thinks brings this dilemma forward most sharply. The pamphlet is called *Human Submission*, by Morrison I. Swift, an anarcho-syndicalist writer and working class agitator. For several pages James quotes and summarizes Swift, who offers case after case showing the misery and injustice perpetuated upon workers in the U.S. at that time. Swift explicitly mentions the objective idealist philosophers who were then in vogue (such as Josiah Royce and F.H. Bradley), and accuses them of not being able to give a satisfactory account of the cases he has brought up; he links "the mind of philosophers and of the proprietary class."<sup>58</sup>

And what James quotes from Swift ends with the words,

"These facts invincibly prove religion a nullity. Man will not give religion two thousand centuries or twenty centuries more to try itself and waste human time. Its time is up; its probation is ended; its own record ends it. Mankind has not aeons and eternities to spare for trying out discredited systems."<sup>59</sup>

So James is aware of the failure of religion to do its job, and he explicitly sets out to remedy the situation, as do all the pragmatists (as seen above).

But there is also another element which must be brought into the picture, and that is *science*. Pragmatism does not at all claim to jettison science in favor of religion. Just the contrary. Pragmatism, like the positivism of which it is a part, is very emphatic in insisting that above all it upholds science. (This particularly comes to the fore with John Dewey.) But the main thing to note about the emphasis which both positivism and pragmatism put on science is that they do so only to *subjectivize* and *idealize* science. As we have seen, for them science is reinterpreted within the framework of a system of subjective idealism.

And this fact also expresses the ideological needs of the capitalist class, particularly under imperialism. For the capitalists *must* use science in production. On the other hand, as the bourgeoisie becomes a reactionary class, standing in the way of further human progress, its ideology *must* become *anti-scientific*. Now it comes to fear the discovery of truth—because the disclo-

sure of the true features of the world and its history will only reveal the impending doom of capitalism and the inevitable death of the capitalist class. As Marx says, speaking of the development of the science of political economy after 1830:

"In France and in England the bourgeoisie had conquered political power. Thenceforth, the class struggle, practically as well as theoretically, took on more and more outspoken and threatening forms. It sounded the knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question, whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful, expedient or inexpedient, politically dangerous or not. In place of disinterested inquirers, there were hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and the evil intent of apologetic."<sup>60</sup>

And how much more is this true in the epoch of imperialism, when capitalism has become completely reactionary! Imperialism, which Lenin characterized as "parasitic or decaying capitalism," and as a system for "artificially retarding the collapse of capitalism,"<sup>61</sup> reveals its decadent and reactionary nature just as much in the ideological as in the political and economic realms. The imperialists must devote a lot of effort to covering up the backward and parasitic nature of their system, attempting to hide the glaring fact that capitalism is out-moded, historically obsolete and done-for.

Thus the dilemma of the imperialist bourgeoisie. On the one hand it must use science, particularly the natural sciences. On the other hand its outlook is fundamentally anti-scientific. The solution it has hit upon is at least four-fold, consisting of: (a) splitting up the sciences into a vast multitude of specialities and blocking an overall scientific point of view; (b) creating various pseudo-sciences of society (sociology, political science, etc.) which serve the function of generating needed information as well as mechanisms of social control; (c) encouraging irrationalist fads (like astrology or Transcendental Meditation today) as well as traditional religion; and (d) propagating bourgeois ideology in terms of an overall world-view.

It is in performance of this last function, of course, that philosophy plays its part. But in order to play this part effectively, it must, on the plane of theory, solve the dilemma of the bourgeoisie outlined above. And further, of course, it must provide room for all of the other three elements of the "solution" given above.

It must be said that pragmatism performs this task admirably (given the limitations of serving a sinking ship.) Now William James was aware that this philosophy just fit the bill, and thus that he had a hot item to sell. And he can be heard, in the pages of *Pragmatism*, hawking his wares to the bourgeoisie:

"Now what kinds of philosophy do you find actually offered to meet your need? You find an empirical philosophy that is not religious enough, and a religious philosophy that is not empirical enough for your purpose. . . I offer the oddly-named thing pragmatism as a philosophy that can satisfy both kinds of demand. It can remain religious like the rationalisms, but at the same time, like the empiricisms, it can preserve the richest intimacy with facts. . . On pragmatistic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true. Now whatever its residual difficulties may be, experience shows that it certainly does work. . . [T]he type of pluralistic and moralistic religion that I have offered is as good a religious synthesis as you are likely to find."<sup>62</sup>

Is this not the speech of a prize-fighter begging to be hired?

It should be apparent from what has been said above that Dewey represents an even slicker packaging of the same material. Given his long career as an ideologist, exemplifying the utmost in fidelity and usefulness to the U.S. bourgeoisie, it is no wonder that the following description can be given of the celebrations of his ninetieth birthday in October 1949:

"A dinner given in his honor at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was sponsored by 'hundreds of leading citizens from all walks of life,' namely from two: from the capitalist class and its labor lieutenants. Leaders of the trusts and their two political parties were joined by the misleaders of labor and representatives of the Liberal, Socialist and Socialist Labor parties in a carnival of jingoism and its counterpart, red-baiting and anti-Sovietism. In newspapers from coast to coast, Dewey was hailed as 'spiritual savior and defender' of 'Western civilization' from 'atheistic, materialistic communism.' He was eulogized as 'a great leader in the world-wide struggle for the minds of men.' Special issues of the *New Republic* and the *New Leader* were devoted to 'Com-

memoration of Dewey's Ninetieth Birthday.' *Time*, *Life*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *U.S. News and World Report* and *News Week*, among others, added article and editorial space to the canonization. There were congratulatory messages from President Truman, Sir Oliver Franks, then U.S. Ambassador of the Labor Party government of Great Britain, and from Giuseppe Saragat, then right-wing socialist Vice Premier of Italy."<sup>63</sup>

(Can it be doubted that this sort of "reward" shows who had hired Dewey?)

But at the same time it must be realized that neither James nor Dewey present themselves as bourgeois apologists or hired prize-fighters. Far from it. Both try to associate themselves in every way with the cause of human progress and often speak against various outrages of capitalism. James, for instance, describes M.I. Swift, the anarchist writer quoted above, as "valiant" and says that he "sympathizes a good deal" with his point of view. James was a member of the Anti-Imperialist League until 1903, and opposed the annexation of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines during the Spanish-American war, writing that ". . . alas! our education as a nation, so far, little fits us for success in administering islands with inferior populations. Spain deserves to lose them, but do we deserve to gain them?"<sup>64</sup>

But, as can be seen from this quotation, it was not exactly that he opposed imperialism as such, but merely that he was not sure if the U.S. was at quite the right point, at the moment, to embark on it. The same sort of picture is presented by James' love-hate attitude toward Theodore Roosevelt, who throughout his career was a sort of living embodiment of U.S. imperialism at this stage. James' friend and biographer, Ralph Barton Perry, sums this attitude up as follows: "As a fighter for ideals Roosevelt was a man after James's own heart; while the roughness of his methods—his lack of taste, sympathy, and discrimination—was profoundly offensive."<sup>65</sup>

Another social question of the day was that of *militarism*, whose rise in capitalist countries was associated with their becoming imperialist. One response to this growing militarism was a current of bourgeois pacifism, particularly among the middle classes. James' relation to this was similarly ambivalent. One of his writings on the subject was "The Moral Equivalent of War," an essay which was published as a leaflet by the Association for International Conciliation in 1910, and which also appeared in several popular magazines. On the one hand, James says, "I devoutly believe in the reign of peace and in the gradual advent of some sort of

socialistic equilibrium."<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, he also devoutly believes that "militarism is the great preserver of our ideas of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible."<sup>67</sup> In order to preserve these militaristic virtues, James proposes that what must be found is a "moral equivalent of war."

An even more revealing example of his attitude is to be found in his speech at the Universal Peace Congress held in Boston in 1904:

"A deadly listlessness would come over most men's imagination of the future if they could seriously be brought to believe that never again *in saecula saeculorum* would a war trouble human history. In such a stagnant summer afternoon of a world, where would be the zest or interest?

This is the constitution of human nature which we have to work against. The plain truth is that people want war.

"The last weak runnings of the war spirit will be 'punitive expeditions.' A country that turns its arms only against uncivilized foes is, I think, wrongly taunted as degenerate. Of course it has ceased to be heroic in the old grand style. But I verily believe that this is because it now sees something better. It has a conscience. It will still perpetuate peccadillos. But it is afraid, afraid in the good sense, to engage in absolute crimes against civilization."<sup>68</sup>

There are several noteworthy features of this passage: the locating of the source of evil ("wanting" war) in the masses rather than in its true source, and James' own apparent attitude that only war brings "zest and interest" to life. But even more revealing is his opinion that while war between different imperialist countries would be a crime against civilization, wars of colonization by the imperialists, on the other hand, are "peccadillos"—petty offenses—which actually show the conscience of the imperialists.

A moralistic mouthing of "high ideals" and sanctimonious sympathy for the "downtrodden masses," while at the same time *theoretically* seeking to undermine the basis for the successful struggle of the masses and *practically* standing with the ruling class at every turn—this sort of technique, which is to be found in James, is characteristic of pragmatism, and is brought to perfection by Dewey. Dewey's practical politics are summed up by Harry K. Wells, a theoretician with the old Communist Party, U.S.A.:

"He extolled Theodore Roosevelt and the 'Big Stick' policies of U.S. imperialism. He fought to get this country into the First World War. He scurried to the defense of Leon Trotsky. And through a twenty-year campaign of vilification he helped fabricate the big lie of 'Soviet imperialism'. He came out in support of the Korean War and contributed substantially to the doctrine of the 'inevitability of World War III'."<sup>69</sup>

At the same time that he was carrying on this sort of political practice, Dewey was carrying on the sort of work in the world of ideas which harmonizes with this practice. It was not only that he was developing the theory of pragmatism, which is a species of bourgeois ideology. He was also applying this particular ideology to the actual historical situation. It will be instructive to look at this, his concrete political and social thinking, during the crucial decade of the 1930s, and thus to see a bourgeois ideologist at work in this sphere. This was the time that saw a world-wide crisis of imperialism and the rise of fascism in Europe, coupled with the growing strength of socialism in the Soviet Union, the resurgence of the workers' movement in this country and elsewhere, and strong communist-led movements against imperialism in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

These world-shaking historical developments could not but affect the development of bourgeois ideology, and Dewey is very sensitive to these facts. In a series of articles written for the liberal magazine *The New Republic* in 1929 and 1930, he brings to the fore some of the main evils of capitalism: the "tragedy" of unemployment, where "... aside from cyclical depressions there is a standing army at all times who have no regular work." He even touches on aspects of the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of appropriation.<sup>70</sup>

And he has an opinion about what the outcome of all this will be:

"We are in for some kind of socialism, call it by whatever name we please, and no matter what it will be called when it is realized."<sup>71</sup>

But not, of course, the dangerous and un-American Marxist-Leninist sort of socialism:

"It would be in accordance with the spirit of American life if the movement were undertaken by voluntary agreement and endeavor rather than by



governmental coercion. There is that much enduring truth in our individualism. . . . A coordinating and directive council in which captains of industry and finance would meet with representatives of labor and public officials to plan the regulation of industrial activity would signify that we had entered constructively and voluntarily upon the road which Soviet Russia is traveling with so much attendant destruction and coercion."<sup>72</sup>

So the Wage and Price Control Board set up under Nixon, and other typical capitalist measures, were just what Doctor Dewey ordered—"socialism" American-bourgeois-style.

And Dewey sees the seeds of this benevolent future in the philanthropic efforts of America's monopoly capitalists:

"The impulse and need which the existing economic regime chokes, through preventing its articulated expression, find outlet in actions that acknowledge a social responsibility which the system as a system denies. Hence the development of philanthropic measures is not only compensatory to a stifling of human nature undergone in business, but it is in a way prophetic. . . . One does not need to reflect upon the personal motives of the great philanthropists to see in what they do an emphatic record of the breakdown of our existing economic organization."<sup>73</sup>

Leaving aside "the personal motives of the great philanthropists" (sordid though they no doubt are, as Dewey recognizes), at least the obvious fact might be pointed out that the objective causes of the "philanthropy" of the great imperialists, from Carnegie to Rockefeller to Ford, were (a) the need to put a certain part of their wealth beyond the reach of income and inheritance taxes; (b) the need to create the image of themselves as public benefactors when their real nature had been increasingly exposed; and (c) the opportunities which foundations, etc. gave them to exercise more control over cultural, ideological and educational institutions in society.

But such an analysis would probably illustrate for Dewey that "monistic and one-way philosophy of history" which is "particularly unacceptable to me in the ideology of official Communism. . . ." Dewey believes that "such Communism rests upon an almost entire neglect of the specific historical backgrounds and traditions which have operated to shape the patterns of thought and action in America." These statements are from Dewey's little

essay on "Why I Am Not a Communist," appearing in the *Modern Monthly* in April 1934.<sup>74</sup> These uniquely American traditions, Dewey preaches, are of course those of democracy and individualism, and it is their neglect which leads communists astray:

"It is a possibility overlooked by official Communists that important social changes in the direction of democratization of industry may be accomplished by groups working *with* the working class although, strictly speaking, not *of* them. The other point ignored by the Communists is our deeply rooted belief in the importance of individuality, a belief which is almost absent in the Oriental world from which Russia has drawn so much."<sup>75</sup>

To comment on this would be like adding salt to the sea. But lest it be thought that there are no lower depths to which Dewey can sink, let it only be added that he also contends that communist activity is a powerful factor in bringing about fascism, so of course, "as an unalterable opponent of Fascism in every form, I cannot be a Communist."<sup>76</sup> And furthermore,

"A revolution effected solely or chiefly by violence can in a modernized society like our own result only in chaos. Not only would civilization be destroyed but the things necessary for bare life. . . . For this reason, too, I am not a Communist."<sup>77</sup>

Dewey returns to all of these themes in more depth in 1935. That was the year in which he published *Liberalism and Social Action*, one of the places in which he sets out his political line fairly completely.

That line is, as he explicitly and indeed vociferously says, that of liberalism, whose task is the "mediation of social transitions."<sup>78</sup> This is a significant phrase, and Dewey spends some time talking about it, saying that until the time (if ever) when a classless society comes into being, liberalism will be needed in order to *mediate* between the new and the old in the process of social change. What Dewey is talking about is the "need" to make continual adjustments in society while keeping its basic structure intact. It is probably unnecessary to point out that this is a need which definitely exists for the ruling class; they must make continual adjustments in order to continue and consolidate their rule in the face of the recurrent crises and increasing bankruptcy of their system, and for this purpose, in most (but not all) situations, liberalism is their line. But by the same token and just as certainly of course,



this need to mediate and adjust is not that of the working class, and liberalism is a line opposed to the interests of the proletariat.

It may be worthwhile to note, parenthetically, that the capitalists are by no means wedded to liberalism, any more than they are to bourgeois democracy, with which it is usually associated. The only thing to which they are committed is their own ruling position, and they have never shown any hesitation in resorting to fascism in order to maintain it. But here too, pragmatism is of use to them—it is no more indissolubly connected with liberalism and bourgeois democracy than are the capitalists themselves. Mussolini, for instance, found James entirely acceptable—and useful:

“The pragmatism of William James was of great use to me in my political career. James taught me that an action should be judged by its results rather than by its doctrinary basis. I learnt of James that faith in action, that ardent will to live and fight, to which Fascism owes a great part of its success.”<sup>79</sup>

Now Dewey actually comes very close in these lectures to openly admitting the fact that the liberalism he espouses is simply the philosophy of the bourgeoisie. Thus he notes that “liberalism” has changed its meaning. The word originally denoted the program of *laissez-faire*, of the government letting-be “the people” in order that they might compete and scramble for the biggest share of material goods—in other words, the classic Adam Smith doctrine of “free competition” and the “invisible hand” which served the needs of early, competitive, capitalism. But, with the growth of capitalism to its monopoly stage, or imperialism, the needs of the capitalist class change, and so does the meaning of the word “liberalism.” Now it comes to mean, according to Dewey, “. . . the use of governmental action for aid to those at economic disadvantage and for alleviation of their conditions.”<sup>80</sup> (Well, it does stand for increased government action and intervention in economic affairs, but hardly for such altruistic purposes as Dewey would have his readers imagine!)

What is notable, however, is that Dewey recognizes this historical change in the meaning of the word, and then goes on to state that the theory of “intelligence” which was associated with the old *laissez-faire* liberalism must be changed. That old theory was not scientific anyway, he says, but “. . . was rather a political weapon devised in the interest of breaking down the rigidity of dogmas and of institutions that had lost their relevancy.”<sup>81</sup> But later, he says, “when conditions had changed and the problem was one of constructing social organization from individual units that

had been released from old social ties, . . .” the old “atomistic individualism” in both psychological and social theory no longer fit the bill. “The theory of mind held by the early liberals advanced beyond dependence upon the past but it did not arrive at the idea of experimental and constructive intelligence.”<sup>82</sup>

In other words, the old theories grouped under the name of liberalism, valuable in their time, have outlived their usefulness and must give way to a new liberalism demanded by new social conditions. It does not take much discernment to see that the old *laissez-faire* liberalism was valuable to one specific class, and that the new program which Dewey is recommending is demanded by the interests of that same class in the new conditions.

Dewey’s ideological function and commitment is only barely beneath the surface here. But lest the bourgeoisie should fail to get the message, their faithful servant warns,

“Objections that are brought against liberalism ignore the fact that the only alternatives to dependence upon intelligence are either drift and casual improvisation, or the use of force stimulated by unintelligent emotion and fanatical dogmatism. . . .”<sup>83</sup>

In other words, the alternatives to liberalism are drifting along, sure to lead to disaster, or “the use of force stimulated by fanatical dogmatism” (this doesn’t refer to a violent proletarian revolution led by those well-known fanatics, the communists, does it?).

But Dewey’s words and doctrines are not only words of advice to the bourgeoisie. They are also directed toward other classes in society, and for them his message must not be one of how good liberalism is at preserving the basic structure of the *status quo*, but rather of how “radical” liberalism really is, how much it understands the injustice and contradictions of capitalism—but at the same time how much a revolutionary solution to these contradictions is both bad and impossible.

First though, he must lay the indispensable basis: idealism. The contradictions of capitalism are due to the ideas in men’s minds. Mankind has for most of its history lived in a condition of objective scarcity, but “thanks to science and technology we now live in an age of potential plenty.”<sup>84</sup> What must now be changed, in order to realize this potential, is “the habits of mind and action,” “the patterns of belief and purpose,” “the habits of desire and effort that were bred in the age of scarcity.”<sup>85</sup> Once these clinging ideas are cast aside, “a cooperative industrial order” can be instituted.<sup>86</sup>

This is the task facing liberalism. “In short,” Dewey says, “liberalism must now become radical. . . .”<sup>87</sup> But not *too* radical:

"But radicalism also means, in the minds of many, both supporters and opponents, dependence upon use of violence as the main method of effecting drastic changes. Here the liberal parts company. For he is committed to the organization of intelligent action as the chief method."<sup>88</sup>

Now Dewey assures his listeners that he is not blind to the elementary fact that capitalism is built upon force and violence:

"It is not pleasant to face the extent to which, as a matter of fact, coercive and violent force is relied upon in the present social system as a means of social control."<sup>89</sup>

But this does not shake Dewey's firm rejection of violence:

"It is true that the social order is largely conditioned by the use of coercive force, bursting at times into open violence. But what is also true is that mankind now has in its possession a new method, that of cooperative and experimental science which expresses the method of intelligence."<sup>90</sup>

In fact, Dewey devotes a good part of his discussion to a polemic against violence. This is not, however, his only polemical target. He also aims his blows (predictably) against Marx, Marxism, and class struggle as the motor of historical change. In opposition to this viewpoint, Dewey holds that

"... the rise of scientific method and of technology based upon it is the genuinely active force in producing the vast complex of changes the world is now undergoing, not the class struggle whose spirit and method are opposed to science."<sup>91</sup>

In other words, the same idealist, reactionary and poisonous pabulum that we have seen before.

Besides the enunciation of political liberalism, an area in which Dewey had an even greater practical impact was in *educational theory*, which should be touched on briefly. What we find is the familiar mixture of claims to scientific procedure and progressivism coupled with a total subservience to the carrying out of the most pressing needs of the bourgeoisie in this field.

In fact, the whole movement which Dewey led was known as "progressivism" in education. Dewey wanted to institute "the

child-centered school" and "education for life," that is to replace the outmoded rigid and authoritarian 19th century educational system with one that is supposedly more scientific, more geared to the actual needs of the child and more in touch with the life of society. In reality, progressivism was the ideological expression of a structural overhaul of a schooling system which was indeed outmoded from the point of view of fulfilling the needs of monopoly capitalism.

From the point of view of the capitalists, the educational system had to be redesigned to train large masses of future workers in literacy and other basic skills increasingly necessary for workers in modern industry. Further, it should "Americanize" the children of the huge masses of immigrants of the late 19th century. Connected with this was the general strategy of instilling bourgeois ideology on a mass scale in order to prevent the rise of such "radical" movements as those of the last decades of the 1800s. In short, the main needs of the imperialists were for a mass education system which would produce a work force with basic literacy and which would inculcate bourgeois ideology. The "progressive" education movement met these requirements admirably. As two recent writers have summed it up:

"Like the reform movement [in education] of the mid-nineteenth century, Progressive education was born in a decade of labor strife and was fueled throughout its course by social unrest and the specter of political upheaval. Like the earlier movement, Progressivism coincided with a dramatic shift in the structure of the economy and the integration of masses of new workers into the wage labor system... Forcefully articulated by John Dewey and others, the precepts of Progressive education were selectively implemented by Ellwood Cubberly and the small army of 'education executives' trained and deployed across the country. This period again witnessed the familiar coalition of liberal professionals and business leaders, often working through philanthropic foundations, who pressed the cause of educational reform... The educational practice of Progressivism brought us the comprehensive high school, tracking, educational testing, home economics, the junior high school, the student council, the daily flag pledge, high-school athletics, the school assembly, vocational education and guidance, clubs, school newspapers and monopolization of executive authority by superintendents

and other professionals."<sup>93</sup>

This article has touched on the "high points" of the philosophy of this ruling class ideologue. The bourgeois nature of Dewey's thought and of pragmatism in general could be brought out in much greater depth and detail, but enough has been said to indicate the main outlines.

It has been seen that pragmatism is the American variety of positivism, which is a bourgeois philosophy arising out of imperialism. What remains to be shown, though, is the connection of pragmatism with the particularities of U.S. imperialism. This is a subject which could be explored in much greater depth than will be possible here, but the main points can be indicated.

Remember that earlier it was pointed out that the distinctness of pragmatism from other forms of positivism lies in the emphasis which pragmatism puts on human will, activity, striving and prac-

\*It should be pointed out that these two liberal-radical scholars, despite their recognition of the practical effects of Progressivism in fulfilling the needs of the bourgeoisie, by no means have a Marxist analysis of John Dewey's role. They think that Progressivism won an "ideological victory," whereby "professional journals, education textbooks, and even the various publications of the U.S. Office of Education mouthed the rhetoric of Progressivism;" but they lament that "... progressive education, though triumphant in educational theory, was never given a chance in practice."<sup>93</sup> The problem was that "... the history of twentieth-century education is the history not of Progressivism but of the imposition upon the schools of 'business values' and social relationships reflecting the pyramid of authority and privilege in the burgeoning capitalist system."<sup>94</sup> What these authors do not see, and what they cannot see in the absence of the Marxism-Leninism which they so obviously lack (despite their eclectic use of a few Marxist concepts), is the genesis, role and functioning of bourgeois ideology. Progressivism was, as pointed out above, the ideological expression of bourgeois social practice in education.

What at first might seem more surprising is that someone who writes a book called *Pragmatism versus Marxism* holds the same position (if not worse) as do these two bourgeois radicals. The person in question is George Novack, theoretician of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party, who praises Dewey's "progressive ideas in education" to the skies, and then notes that these ideas have had a "paradoxical career"—for while "they are the entrenched creed in education" throughout the U.S., "yet this supremacy in the domain of educational theory has not been matched by an equivalent reconstruction of the educational system." The reason is that "... the kind of education he [Dewey] urged went counter to the demands of monopoly capitalism."<sup>95</sup> Overall, Novack says, Dewey's philosophy has been "... a necessary phase in the evolution of American thought, and in its time and place even a progressive one, which has been rendered obsolete by new conditions." It is hard to tell whether this sort of garbage is an outcome of pure opportunism on the part of the Trotskyites—who are willing to throw out even the pretense of a materialist analysis in order to defend Dewey because of his role in heading the "Commission of Inquiry" which claimed that Trotsky was being framed and defamed in the Soviet Union in the middle 1930s—or whether it is simply the expression of the straight-out rightism and bourgeois liberalism for which the SWP is justly famed.

tice. What do these characteristics have to do with the features of U.S. capitalism, especially as it developed into imperialism?

Essentially they are connected with two of the most distinctive features of the development of capitalism and imperialism in this country. First, U.S. capitalism did not develop out of feudalism and did not have feudal remnants to contend with. This meant that the bourgeoisie could bring forward its own philosophy without having to contend with the modes of thought characteristic of the feudal ruling class.\*

Cornforth, for instance, says of pragmatism that

"It has never had the same appeal in Europe. Almost without exception the European bourgeois philosophers... have found it hard to understand, unconvincing, and even shocking."<sup>96</sup>

He connects this with the unfettered development of capitalism in the U.S. after the Civil War and contrasts the situation here with that in England, where "... the successful capitalists had tended to imitate the way of life of the landed gentry."<sup>97</sup> This is because of the fact that the aristocracy in England, at a fairly early date, had made a compromise with the bourgeoisie and admitted them as partners to the ruling class. Hence the culture of the bourgeoisie was mingled with elements of the culture of the feudal aristocracy—causing the ideological representatives of the bourgeoisie to feel shocked at such a crude and vulgar expression of the aggressive outlook of imperialism as pragmatism is. And substantially this same analysis could be applied to other European countries, for in all of these the bourgeoisie made compromises with the past rulers.

Secondly, U.S. capitalism and imperialism was able to develop very rapidly and vigorously, rolling over all opposition both internally and externally. Hence the bourgeoisie could emphasize pure action and the malleability of the world to their action because this was indeed how the world appeared to them. Because of their success, they could produce a pure philosophy of success—if something succeeds, don't worry about why, just go ahead.

\*The exception to this, of course, was the South, where first a slaveowning aristocracy existed and rivalled the capitalists in the North for control of the government and then, after the Civil War, semi-feudal survivals existed on a significant scale for 75 years or more, until World War 2 and shortly after. But overall in the U.S., capitalism was able to develop relatively free of the restraints of feudalism. And in the ideological sphere, reflecting these material conditions, the kind of struggle that had to be waged by the bourgeoisie in Europe against the ideas and traditions promoted by the feudal aristocracy was not a necessity in the same way for the U.S. bourgeoisie.

Because of the success of their practice, their philosophy could be a theory of contempt for theory. This doctrine of "something's true if it works" and never mind about theory was all the truth they needed.

And this was all the truth they needed because once capitalism really developed in the United States as full-blown capitalism with a national market and slavery eliminated, monopolies grew up relatively quickly and thus it developed into imperialism in a rapid and uninterrupted way. This meant that the U.S. bourgeoisie never really developed the progressive bourgeois philosophy which was brought forth in Europe as a weapon against the feudal aristocracy. The theoretical contribution of the U.S. ruling class has instead been a philosophy of decadence and reaction.

So because of these features of the development of U.S. imperialism, the U.S. monopoly bourgeoisie expressed its world outlook in an emphasis on success, on pure practice, in a total contempt for theory unless it is linked in the most narrow and immediate way with successful practice. There are many examples of this outlook that immediately come to mind—Thomas Edison as the prototype of an American scientist, with his string of successful inventions, his shrewd business sense through which he could make his "science" pay, and his reliance upon tinkering and his hostility to scientific theory; or Henry Ford, with his "fabulous" business success and his statement that "history is bunk," that is that there is nothing to be learned from history, no historical laws.

A very revealing statement of this idea of success which is so intimately associated with pragmatism is given by Ralph Barton Perry, friend and biographer of William James, in a speech on the topic, "Is There a North American Philosophy?":

"It is a mistake to suppose that the American idea of success is limited to material success. That which is characteristically American is not the exclusion of art, literature, science and religion by the pursuit of wealth, but the *introduction into* art, literature, science and religion of something of the same spirit and attitude of which the pursuit of wealth affords the most notable or notorious manifestation: not the drowning of culture by the hum of industry, but the idea of making culture hum. And so material success, yes, but any kind of success, with no prejudice whatever against cultural attainment provided it can be recognized and measured as success. The standard is not essentially sordid or commercial, but it is essentially competitive, whether that con-

sists in beating records or in beating other competitors."<sup>98</sup>

To which one can only say: Amen! You have indeed captured the spirit of your masters admirably, Professor Perry. It's refreshing to have such a candid statement from an ideological representative of the U.S. bourgeoisie.

### COMMUNISTS AND PRAGMATISM

Contemporary pragmatists in the United States are legion, not only among professional philosophers, but within all the ranks of ruling class ideologues. Of special importance for the working class and its Party, however, are pragmatist opportunists within the working class movement, and particularly pragmatists who masquerade as communists.

And, although pragmatism is a specifically American bourgeois phenomenon in its origin, its influence is not restricted to this country. This also holds true for the working class and communist movements as well as for the ruling classes.

A good example of this can be found in the Chinese revolution. In the early part of this century, when a strong national-democratic and anti-imperialist movement was beginning to stir within that semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, two lines clearly confronted the nascent revolutionary movement: communism on the one hand and bourgeois ideology on the other. In fact, of course, only communism offered a way of carrying even the national-democratic revolution through to completion and totally throwing out imperialism, and in so doing make the necessary advance to the next, the socialist, stage. As Mao said: "Only socialism can save China."<sup>99</sup> But of course this fact was not obvious to many in the revolutionary movement, to whom it appeared that China's problem in the face of the onslaught of Western imperialism was its backwardness. Hence in opposition to the line that only socialism could save China the slogan was raised that "Only modernization can save China." In fact what was meant by "modernization" was "Westernization," i.e., capitalist development. And, not so coincidentally, the way in which this line was often put forward was in the form of an explicit posing of pragmatism against Marxism.

This battle between Marxism and pragmatism was first waged within the May Fourth Movement, the massive student anti-imperialist struggle which swept across China after a huge student demonstration in Peking on May 4, 1919. Just three days previously, John Dewey had arrived in Shanghai to give a series of lectures. He was to stay in China, as it turned out, for more than

two years. While in China he was very actively promoted and gained a sizable following among those who did not want the May Fourth Movement to take a revolutionary direction. His lectures were immediately translated and published in Chinese, in a book which went through fourteen printings of ten thousand copies each within the next two years, and which continued to be reprinted up until the 1950s.<sup>100</sup> His chief proponent and disciple was Hu Shih, who called for "More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms."<sup>101</sup>

Pragmatism was advocated in the "Manifesto of the *Hsin Chin Nien* [New Youth] Magazine," put out in December 1919, which said in part: "We believe that it is requisite for the progress of our present society to uphold natural science and pragmatic philosophy, and to abolish superstition and fantasy."<sup>102</sup> Hu Shih had soon joined the staff of this monthly magazine after it had been founded in 1915 by Chen Tu-hsiu, and together Hu and Chen had been two of the foremost leaders in the New Literature movement, which had attacked Confucian culture and which later merged with the anti-imperialist student uprisings to form the New Culture movement. Hu Shih went on to become a staunch anti-communist, and later joined the Kuomintang government, serving Chiang Kai-shek as ambassador to the U.S. from 1942 to 1945.

Chen Tu-hsiu, on the other hand, became one of the founding members of the Communist Party of China in 1921. His conversion to Marxism, however, did not free him from the influence of pragmatism, and in fact he called for a united front between pragmatism and Marxism in the philosophical realm—while at the same time (and surely not coincidentally) calling for all unity and no struggle between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party on the political front. Chen headed the CPC until 1927, and the rightist and capitulationist line which he advocated bore bitter fruit in 1927, with the infamous Chiang Kai-shek massacre of communists and workers.

Thus the fight against pragmatism was a crucial one both within the anti-imperialist movement and within the Communist Party in China. Nor should it be thought that pragmatism ceased to have influence in China after the 1920s. In 1950 the Chinese journal *People's Education* noted:

"If we want to criticize the old theories of education, we must begin with Dewey. The educational ideas of Dewey have dominated and controlled Chinese education for thirty years, and his social philosophy and general philosophy have also influenced a part of the Chinese people."<sup>103</sup>

But despite the vigorous campaign against the influence of Dewey

and Hu Shih which was carried on during the early 1950s, as might be expected this did not mean that the influence of pragmatism and bourgeois lines generally in education was rooted out. In fact one of the decisive struggles in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, beginning in the mid-1960s, was the battle to overturn the domination of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois academic authorities in education. And in many ways the debate which began during the Cultural Revolution concerning the contradiction between "being red" (i.e., grasping Marxism-Leninism and the correct ideological and political line), and "being expert" (i.e., being technically skilled), reflects this. Obviously both redness and expertise are needed, but the question is, which is principal? The revisionist position on this question was to put technical proficiency in command, and it is easy to see how this is the expression of a pragmatic outlook. At several key junctures of the Chinese Revolution, Mao Tsetung waged sharp struggle against those who saw the achievement of immediate results, especially in production, as justifying bourgeois practices and methods. It is no exaggeration to say that throughout its history the struggle against pragmatism has been of tremendous importance in determining victory or defeat in the Chinese Revolution.

The defeat of pragmatism is perhaps even more crucial for the revolutionary movement in the United States. As a specifically American ruling class philosophy, its influence in this country has reached everywhere. Marx and Engels pointed out in *The German Ideology* and the *Communist Manifesto* that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."<sup>104</sup> This has certainly been true of pragmatism in the United States. And furthermore, besides the general truth that as the ruling class philosophy it is bound to have been the ruling intellectual force, the relative success of U.S. imperialism has allowed the imperialists to propagate pragmatism broadly among the masses. And it has meant that it has also penetrated deeply into the ranks of the workers' and the communist movements in the U.S.

It is obvious that the ideas of "business unionism," of "trade unionism pure and simple," that have been pushed by figures in the labor movement from Samuel Gompers to George Meany, represent pragmatism. For their line has always been to go for what pays, for what offers immediate advantage, and they have also been vociferous in their total rejection of theory, of even the most surface-level laws or principles to guide the workers' struggle. But of course this pragmatism, which is supposed to lead to success, actually leads to capitulation to the bourgeoisie, and to defeat of the interests of the working class even in the short term—in other

words success for the bourgeoisie in fact. This is connected with the fact that this type of traitor has become more and more openly nothing but an apologist and errand-boy for U.S. imperialism both within this country and abroad.

This sort of pragmatist, of course, does not even claim to be anything more than a reformist. But within the workers' revolutionary movement, pragmatism has also often raised its head. One notable form in which it has arisen has been that of "American exceptionalism." In 1920, for example, the Socialist Party, under the leadership of the notorious opportunist Morris Hillquit, made an application to join the Communist International, but on the condition that the Comintern recognize the supposed fact that the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat did not apply in the United States!<sup>105</sup>

Later in the 1920s a faction within the Communist Party, USA was organized by Jay Lovestone around a similar line, one which came down to claiming that the principles of Marxism-Leninism did not apply in this country. (In fact it was in application to this faction that the label "American exceptionalism" was coined.) The Lovestoneites' general line was that U.S. capitalism was somehow an exception to laws of capitalist crisis, coupled with a glorification of the role of the U.S. bourgeoisie. In 1928 Lovestone claimed that the U.S. bourgeoisie was entering a "Hooverian age" of prosperity and stability, and even after the crash of 1929 he claimed that this "panic in Wall Street" was actually a result of the *strength* of American capitalism!<sup>106</sup>

The same themes reappeared in an even more virulent form in the Browderite revisionism of the late '30s and early '40s. Although, as has been pointed out in previous articles in *The Communist*, the basic policies of the CPUSA during this period were closely linked to certain errors in the line of the Communist International which were formulated at its Seventh Congress in 1935, it is also clear that even before this the CPUSA made significant errors based on pragmatism and that the ways in which the CPUSA implemented the 7th Congress' Popular Front policy "... were among the most disgraceful in the world."<sup>107</sup> Browder promoted the disgusting slogan, "Communism is 20th Century Americanism," trying to portray communism as the heir, not to the tradition of such "foreigners" as Marx and Lenin, but to the American "revolutionary tradition" of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. The CP even held up the genealogy of Earl Browder, tracing it back to Virginia before the American Revolution, bellowing that "The Browders have a right to say that they are among the founders of America. They are of the 'blood and bone' of America." And writing such drivel as the following:

"It was in the springtime of 1776 and Thomas Jefferson may well have been driving his one-horse shay... with a draft of the Declaration of Independence in his pocket, when a certain boy, just turned 21, stepped into a recruiting station in Dinwiddie County, Virginia. He gave his name as Littleberry Browder and was sworn in as a soldier of the Continental Army of General George Washington."<sup>108</sup>

But Browderism was to reach even more extreme forms. In 1942 Browder wrote in his book, *Victory and After*:

"The CP has completely subordinated its own ideas as to the best possible social and economic system for our own country... to the necessity of uniting the entire nation, including the biggest capitalist... We will not raise any socialist proposals for the United States, in any form that can disturb this national unity."<sup>109</sup>

Two years later, with the victory of the Allies over the Axis powers in sight, he wrote that

"... the policy for Marxists in the United States is to face with all its consequences the perspective of a capitalist postwar reconstruction of the United States, to evaluate all plans on that basis, and to collaborate actively with the most democratic and progressive majority in the country in a national unity sufficiently broad and effective enough to realize the policies of Teheran."<sup>110</sup>

What Browder is referring to by the phrase "the policies of Teheran" are the agreements reached at the Teheran Conference between the Soviet Union, Britain and the U.S. concerning their common aims in the war against the fascist powers and their plans for cooperation in the postwar world. For Browder, a capitalist-socialist "coalition" should also be built in the U.S., and this heralded a whole new era, one in which

"We must be prepared to give the hand of cooperation and fellowship to everyone who fights for the realization of this coalition. If J.P. Morgan supports this coalition and goes down the line for it, I as a Communist am prepared to clasp his hand on that

and join with him to realize it. Class divisions or political groupings have no significance now except as they reflect one side or the other of this issue."<sup>111</sup>

This contrasts very strongly indeed with Mao's correct analysis and method of dealing with the postwar situation. In his 1946 appraisal of the international situation, Mao noted that certain compromises would be reached between the Soviet Union and the United States, England and France, but that

"Such compromise does not require the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromises at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions."<sup>112</sup>

But this sort of revolutionary and materialist analysis was not for Browder. Rather, this opportunist snake declared that

"Marxists will not help the reactionaries, by opposing the slogan of 'Free Enterprise' with any form of counter-slogan. If anyone wishes to describe the existing system of capitalism in the United States as 'free enterprise', that is all right with us, and we frankly declare that we are ready to cooperate in making this capitalism work effectively in the postwar period with the least possible burdens upon the people."<sup>113</sup>

With this as his "theoretical base," Browder soon succeeded, in 1944, in actually dissolving the Party and instituting in its stead the "Communist Political Association," which declared itself to be

"... a non-party organization of Americans which, basing itself upon the working class, carries forward the traditions of Washington, Jefferson, Paine, Jackson and Lincoln, under the changed conditions of modern industrial society."<sup>114</sup>

The CPA went on immediately to take up as its main activity—all-out organizing in support of Roosevelt's presidential candidacy.

It is clear that what is displayed here is revisionism of a grotesque sort. And it is also clear that what led to this revisionism was pragmatism. The Party's interpretation of the popular front policy, and even more its "everything for victory" policy after the invasion of the Soviet Union, did bring immediate and tangible

results. Its membership multiplied rapidly and its influence increased tremendously. Two anti-communist scholars write:

"During the early years of its existence, the CP had been marginal in American society; during the Popular Front, it had influenced important segments of the liberal public; but only during the war years, when it could fuse American and Russian patriotism and penetrate a great many wartime institutions, did it seriously begin to approach the centers of American political power."<sup>115</sup>

In this situation, the Party simply threw the fundamental laws of history and society revealed by Marxism-Leninism out the window. Revisionist policies seemed to work, so in effect the Party said, "Never mind the reasons, let's just do it." A clearer example of pragmatism would be hard to find.

And it would also be hard to find a better example of the disastrousness of pragmatism for the working class. For the ideological capitulation to the bourgeoisie, which pragmatism represented, led to, and was bound to lead to, capitulation to the enemy in the political and even economic spheres as well. And indeed this abject surrender is clearly apparent in Browder's words, with his hand outstretched to J.P. Morgan, symbolic of the whole class of monopoly capitalists. In fact, Browderism (never thoroughly rooted out of the Party despite Browder's expulsion) simply set up the working class for the blows which the bourgeoisie directed against it in the late '40s and early '50s. All the "successes" for which the Browderites were willing to throw out Marxist principles were blown away like dust. The political influence which the Browderites thought they had was eliminated, and communists were expelled from the unions which they had worked so hard to build.

This influence of pragmatism in the Communist Party is also illustrated by the fact that the Party did not put out a full-fledged study of this U.S. ruling class philosophy until 1954, and even then the book (*Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism*, by Harry K. Wells), while containing some valuable Marxist analysis, also exhibits some striking flaws.

Most prominently, Wells does not write as if pragmatism is a danger or has ever had an effect in the CPUSA or in the working class movement. Virtually his sole mention of the influence of pragmatism in the working class is the hypothetical and platitudinous statement that

"If the working class were to follow the teachings of



Dewey, it would cast aside the generalized experience of the class embodied in the science of Marxism-Leninism, and would rely in its strategy and tactics solely on the power of its day-to-day experience to provide, in its own ongoing movement, the needed principles of class struggle."<sup>116</sup>

There is no discussion of the influence of pragmatism within the Party of the working class, nor is there any mention of Browder.

Further, Wells' analysis of pragmatism does not actually show how it is the ideological expression of the production relations of U.S. imperialism, but he rather analyzes it for the most part as if the imperialists adopted this philosophy as a conscious ploy. Thus he continually falls into the following line of argument: Pragmatists say that whatever is useful is true; this means they're saying that whatever is useful to U.S. imperialism is thereby true; thus the spread of pragmatism merely represents a way in which the imperialists try to convince the American people that the lies which are useful to U.S. imperialism are true. But of course this does not represent the way in which pragmatism actually arises, besides which this thesis fundamentally fails to explain why pragmatism should have widespread influence among the ranks of conscious revolutionaries. If it were nothing but a plot, it should not be that hard for revolutionaries to reject it.

The summation of this mistaken line can be found in Wells' analysis that the essence of pragmatism "is to be found in its usefulness to the dominant power in the United States today,"<sup>117</sup> which is to say that the essence of pragmatism lies in the fact that the imperialists push it for pragmatic reasons. While it is certainly true that it is useful to them, this is not its essence. The essence of pragmatism is that it is the *ideology of U.S. imperialism*. This means that it does serve the interests of the American imperialists. It also means that it represents the way in which these imperialists actually view the world. This is because bourgeois ideology (of which pragmatism is one type) is part of the superstructure of capitalist society. It arises out of the relations of production of capitalism. As Marx and Engels put it: "the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance."<sup>118</sup> Thus pragmatism is undoubtedly useful to the U.S. imperialists, but it is useful precisely because it expresses their world outlook and because it arises out of the social-material relations of a society in which these very imperialists are the ruling class.

Another aspect of this same feature is that Wells often writes as

If every twist and turn of imperialist apologetics could be deduced from the philosophy of pragmatism. But this is actually idealist, reversing the correct relation between theory and practice, for in fact pragmatism is the generalized philosophy of imperialism and apologetics for imperialism—it arises out of these practices, the practices do not arise out of the philosophy.

This illustrates a failure to grasp pragmatism adequately on the theoretical plane, a failure which is surely related to the Communist Party's infection with pragmatism on the practical level. This pragmatism, of course, manifested itself as a strong reformist tendency, and this is also reflected at one point in Wells' book when he attempts to analyze reforms:

"There is nothing wrong with reform providing one condition is insisted upon, namely, that it is not made an end in itself, a final, single fixed end. Only when day-to-day struggle is seen as quantitative change preparing the way for qualitative change, the change which is at once the destruction of the old evil and the leap to the new good, is there nothing wrong with reform."<sup>119</sup>

This is by no means an adequate analysis of reforms, and in fact reflects reformism. For, as Lenin points out more than once, the essential thing for a communist is the *quality* of the fight for reforms—that it be done in a revolutionary and not a reformist way—and the quality of the reforms themselves.<sup>120</sup> But Wells talks as if there's no difference in the way these immediate gains are fought for, or in their intrinsic quality, but merely in how they're viewed—either as ends in themselves or as stepping stones to revolution. But in fact the piling up of any quantity of bourgeois reforms will not lead to the qualitative change of revolution, as Wells seems to be saying here. This is nothing but classic revisionist reformism.

Another example of revisionism and reformism, in more recent times, is the Jarvis-Bergman clique which was recently defeated in its attempt to seize and wreck the Revolutionary Communist Party. Their line, characterized by economism and eclecticism, was also clearly pragmatist. Their whole focus was on results and success in the most narrow and immediate sense, and their contempt for theory was profound. Rather than seeing Marxism-Leninism as a scientific theory for understanding the world and guiding the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, they saw it as a "cookbook" from which to select recipes to whip up successful solutions to immediate problems.

In area after area of work in which the Party is involved—among



employed workers, among youth, among the unemployed, among veterans—these Mensheviks pushed the line of liquidating independent communist work, of focusing only on how many people could be brought to a particular demonstration or how much press coverage could be gotten, of “organize, organize” and “fight, fight, fight,” of making winning “palpable results” in the immediate battle into the main or only thing, of negating the work of raising the consciousness of the masses and training the advanced in Marxism-Leninism. It is clear that this is rightist and revisionist, a glaring application of the original revisionist slogan, “the movement is everything, the final aim is nothing.” But it should also be clear that this line is an embodiment of pragmatism, whose slogan, it might be said, is “results are everything, underlying principles and laws are nothing.”

Characteristic of this particular form of pragmatism and rightism is the fact that this clique has written almost nothing of substance on any of the particular line questions involved. At most, all they have put out is a combination of vile personal abuse and a rather thin pseudo-theoretical smokescreen to try to camouflage their actual positions. As a recent article in *Revolution* commented, this makes polemicizing against them more like grabbing a handful of slime than taking hold of a consistent (if opportunist) political line.<sup>121</sup> Nonetheless they have not actually succeeded in covering over their real nature and line, as many vivid examples reveal.

Two slogans which were pushed by Mickey Jarvis as he was helping to set up a revisionist headquarters within the Party are particularly revealing. They are:

- (1) The general resides in the particular; and
- (2) It's easier to steer a truck once it's moving.

Inspiring slogans to guide the proletariat in its revolutionary struggle! By (2), the Mensheviks meant that it's easier to steer some movement in the “right” direction after it gets going. The meaning is clear: don't try to base yourself on and put out a revolutionary line first off; just try to get some sort of movement going, and then it will be time enough to worry about steering it in a revolutionary direction.

This hardly deserves comment. Marxism-Leninism as a tool for analyzing the objective world and disclosing the underlying laws at work is negated—instead the job of a communist is reduced to “stirring things up” until the “truck” gets moving, then sitting in the driver's seat and steering it according to his own ideas. The commandism and contempt for the masses which is an integral part of all rightism comes through here loud and clear too. Completely liquidated is the role of Marxist propaganda and broad exposures. Everything must be linked to the particular strug-

gle—either in terms of getting it “stirred up” in the first place or in terms of “steering” it. This is the basis for the statement in their “Worker” newspaper that “the task of the *Worker* is to stand with the people and build the battles *that they are in* [my emphasis].”<sup>122</sup>

In the attempt at a justification of their line which they have finally issued, they proclaim defensively, “steering the truck is easier when it's moving.” Indeed it is. And the path which these opportunists have chosen undoubtedly *is* the easier road. The only problem is that it is not the path which will lead to revolution—a hard, high road which these pragmatists have turned tail and raced away from.

As for (1), like many revisionist slogans, it is not, taken by itself, false. General truths are abstracted from concrete reality and are manifested in it. But the way in which this slogan was used by this revisionist headquarters was to focus in entirely on the particular and to try to make the entire general truth reside in one or a few isolated particulars. Again, of course, the effect is to bank everything on the particular struggle, to pretend that all the general truths about capitalism and imperialism can be drawn out of whatever struggle these scabs happen to be involved in.

In fact, of course, it is not the real general which they draw out of these particulars, but a counterfeit. Their “general truths” are not the truths discovered by Marxism. Often enough, the general statements that they do make are nothing but the “truths” of straight-out pragmatism. Take their official speech at their May Day event this year:

“In 1968 people thought big. Thinking big in 1968 meant building organizations, building movements... against the war in Vietnam, against discrimination, in support of people of color [sic] for liberation....

“In 1978 we again have to start thinking big... No bosses, no foremen, no bloodsuckers allowed... That's the blood and guts of what we are talking about. No bosses allowed on one day is fine, a just, a righteous demand. No bosses around on any day is even better. To get from one to the other is a question of conditions and thinking big.”<sup>123</sup>

It is needless to refute this from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism, since from that point of view it refutes itself. Perhaps the only thing worth discussing in this statement is the question of what is most obviously revisionist. Is it their description of socialism or is it their description of how to get there? For the purposes of this article it is only necessary to note the complete and

total absence of the Marxist-Leninist science of history and society. Gone are the underlying laws of history, the laws of capitalism, the laws of proletarian revolution, the laws of socialism. Present only is "bigness"—truly a palpable result!

Even in the absence of such blatant slogans and self-exposures, the practice of these Mensheviks would speak volumes. This practice, in different spheres of work, has been described by those familiar with it in recent issues of *Revolution* and certain common themes come out of all these descriptions. One of these is the constant practice of presenting the enemy not as the capitalist system and its ruling class, but as particular policies of these rulers and particular people implementing them. A striking example was their attempt, within the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC) over the past year, to steer all work into a campaign against "Carter's unemployment offensive." The hallmark of this campaign was the implicit analysis that there was a "systematic national policy" attributable to individuals or groups of individuals, a policy that could be turned around if UWOC could just organize a big enough demonstration in Washington against it. In other words, instead of a Marxist analysis of growing unemployment and all-around attacks on the working class in the context of a spiral of deepening crisis—analysis based on the underlying laws of monopoly capitalism—they put forward an "explanation" in terms of conscious plots by bourgeois politicians.<sup>124</sup>

Another theme which was very pervasive in the line of this revisionist clique was that the masses cannot grasp principles, that they are basically not interested in revolution, and that they will not follow real communist leadership. This was shown in their attitude toward the formation of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade, which they opposed because they thought that there is so much anticommunism among the masses that no one would join an openly communist organization.<sup>125</sup> It is shown in the way they dropped the Party slogan, "Workers Unite to Lead the Fight Against All Oppression," from their May Day events this year like a hot rock. And the reasons they give for dropping it are at least as revealing: "It is an abstract call to fight all oppression divorces [sic] from the actual struggles that workers are already waging," and "the slogan is nothing but a reflection of the desires of the petty bourgeoisie to get the working class to fight [sic] its battles . . ." <sup>126</sup> It is shown by the work they have done this Spring around the Davis Cup demonstration, the Kent State struggle, the Bakke Decision,<sup>127</sup> in all of which they attempted to reduce everything to the lowest common denominator and the most philistine, petty and reformist political line.

Examples could be multiplied in sickening profusion, but enough has been said to indicate the prominent features of their line.

Again, the rightism and revisionism of this line is clear, but what also needs to be seen is how it embodies pragmatism. And in seeing this, one more example might be useful. The Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party issued an important report to the membership in 1976 entitled "Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation."<sup>128</sup> The Jarvis-Bergman clique covertly opposed the Report at the time and tried to subvert it afterwards. Now, since their defeat, they have come out in open opposition to this as to other points in the Party's revolutionary line. (One of the things that they have raised is that you shouldn't call the present situation a non-revolutionary one. It is not, of course, that they think it is a revolutionary one—it's just that they don't think it's helpful in the day-to-day struggle to call it non-revolutionary. Here their pragmatism stands naked. Don't worry about analyzing the actual situation by the use of Marxism-Leninism, they say—just dish up whatever "analysis" will give the best immediate results!

And the same thing underlies all the different aspects of their line. Why did they concoct the "Carter offensive?" Because they thought they could organize a big and successful demonstration against it. Why did they oppose the formation of an openly communist youth organization? Because they thought they could unite more youth by hiding communism. In every case, they simply grabbed at whatever seemed to promise the best immediate results. And the basis for clutching at immediate results is a disbelief in the real possibility of using Marxism to analyze the immediate situation in terms of the underlying laws of capitalism and imperialism, and of arming the masses with Marxism to enable them to consciously make revolution and transform the world.

Let us return to the characterization of pragmatism in the RCP Programme:

" . . . an American ruling class philosophy which says, 'It is not really possible to know the laws which govern nature and society; if something seems to work, never mind the reasons do it.' "

This study of pragmatism has confirmed the correctness of this characterization of pragmatism. And what it says is that the promise of this philosophy is the idealist one that it is not really possible to know the world and its laws; knowing the real truth is impossible, and in this situation, pragmatism says, whatever is useful and expedient is as good as truth—in fact, let's just say it is truth. And this is precisely the unifying theme of the line of this Menshevik clique—focusing upon the immediate results in the particular struggle, premised upon the disbelief in the possibility of

knowing the underlying laws of society.

Pragmatism, then, is the philosophy of U.S. imperialism. It is poison for the proletariat and its Party. Where it infects the communist and working class movements, it causes rightism and revisionism. It represents capitulation to the bourgeoisie in the realm of theory, and this is inseparable from capitulation in the political and economic struggles of the working class. The desperate grab for "success" in bourgeois terms leads to defeat in terms of the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, as the history of the CPUSA so well illustrates. The road to *proletarian* success leads over the dead body of this philosophical agent of the bourgeoisie. ■

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>C.S. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 5.402 (= Vol. 5, paragraph 402), ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.). This famous essay originally appeared in the *Popular Science Monthly*, 1878.

<sup>2</sup>*Collected Papers*, 5.403.

<sup>3</sup>Or more accurately, given the way Peirce framed his definition, other diamonds which had resisted being scratched by almost everything else.

<sup>4</sup>William James, "What Pragmatism Means," *Pragmatism* (Cleveland and New York, 1955 [originally published 1907]) pp. 43-44.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup>"Some Metaphysical Problems," *Pragmatism*, p. 77.

<sup>7</sup>*The Will To Believe and Other Essays on Popular Philosophy* (New York, 1956 [originally published 1897]).

<sup>8</sup>Murray G. Murphey, *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 99.

<sup>9</sup>Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.402, note 2.

<sup>10</sup>Anatole France, *The Revolt of the Angels*, Chapter 30; quoted by Maurice Cornforth, *In Defense of Philosophy Against Positivism and Pragmatism* (New York, 1950), p. 159.

<sup>11</sup>John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (New York, 1960 [originally published 1929]), p. 304.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>13</sup>"Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," *Pragmatism*, p. 133. Some of James' italics are dropped.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 135, 145. James' italics.

<sup>15</sup>Gertrude Ezorsky, "Pragmatic Theory of Truth," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York, 1967), Vol. 6, p. 428.

<sup>16</sup>"How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Collected Papers*, 5.407, and "What Pragmatism Is" (originally published 1905), *Collected Papers*, 5.416.

<sup>17</sup>Ezorsky, "Pragmatic Theory of Truth," p. 427. This problem for Peirce is also discussed by Murphey, *Development of Peirce's Philosophy*, pp. 163-171.

<sup>18</sup>See the first two manuscripts collected under the title "Truth" as Chapter 5 of Vol. 5 of Peirce's *Collected Papers*, especially 5.552, 5.563 and 5.564, and Murphey, *Development of Peirce's Philosophy*, pp. 360-363.

<sup>19</sup>*Studies in Logical Theory* (Chicago, 1903), p. 75.

<sup>20</sup>*Essays in Experimental Logic* (Chicago, 1916), pp. 24-25. See also page 240 for the same idea.

<sup>21</sup>*Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston, 1948 [originally published 1920]), pp. 156-57.

<sup>22</sup>*The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 129, 198.

<sup>23</sup>*Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York, 1938), pp. iii-iv.

<sup>24</sup>Conversely, just as Dewey's doctrine comes down to being the same thing as James', the latter can also express himself in terms very much like those of Dewey. See, for example, the essay "Humanism and Truth," *Pragmatism*, especially p. 255 (originally published in *The Meaning of Truth*, 1909).

<sup>25</sup>See for example *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p. 157.

<sup>26</sup>V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14 (Moscow, 1972), p. 342n. Ellipsis in original; Lenin's italics. This passage can be found on pages 414-415 of the Peking FLP edition of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

<sup>27</sup>*The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (tr. H. Martineau, 1853—a free translation and condensation of *Cours de Philosophie Positive* which was endorsed by Comte), excerpted in H.D. Aiken, *The Age of Ideology: The 19th Century Philosophers* (New York, 1956), pp. 124, 135.

<sup>28</sup>*System of Positive Polity*, in Gertrude Lenzer, *Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings* (New York, 1975), p. 357.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>33</sup>Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1967), p. 332. The sentence which I have put in parentheses is actually a footnote in the original.

<sup>34</sup>Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations, and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical* (New York, 1959—5th edition, originally published 1906), p. 12.

<sup>35</sup>Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

<sup>36</sup>Peter Alexander, "Mach, Ernst," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, p. 118.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>38</sup>James in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, quoted in John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (London, 1966), p. 108.

<sup>39</sup>James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (London, 1912), p. 11. Of course James often claimed that pragmatism was separable from radical empiricism, and in particular that you could have the former without the latter. But, as this quotation shows, when his guard was down he shows his true thought—that pragmatism would lead to this. And at any rate, regardless of what James thought, the fact that this same variety of subjective idealism keeps reappearing in pragmatist philosophers even up to the present day makes it seem that there is more than an accidental connection between the two.

<sup>40</sup>*Pragmatism*, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup>*New York Times*, November 3, 1907, in *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott (New York, 1968), p. 448.

<sup>42</sup>See, for example, *Experience and Nature* (Chicago, 1925), p. 72 and pp. 325-26.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 157-58.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 262, 74.

<sup>47</sup>*The Quest for Certainty*, p. 211.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>50</sup>"Dewey's New Logic," *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. P.A. Schilpp (Evanston, Ill., 1939), p. 143. As Russell notes, he makes the same claim in his *Freedom Versus Organization* (New York, 1934), p. 221.

<sup>51</sup>"Theses on Feuerbach," No. 2, *Selected Works*, K. Marx and F. Engels (Moscow, 1969), p. 13.

<sup>52</sup>"On Practice," *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol. 1 (Peking, 1967), pp. 296, 297.

<sup>53</sup>*Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 142.

<sup>54</sup>See Engels' "Introduction to the English Edition" of his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Peking, 1975), pp. 20-22. (In the International Publishers edition, it is pages 13-15.)

<sup>55</sup>Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, pp. 139-40.

<sup>56</sup>Mao Tsetung, "On Practice," *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 299.

<sup>57</sup>*Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Peking), p. 29. (International Publishers ed., p. 20.)

<sup>58</sup>*Pragmatism*, p. 32.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>60</sup>*Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup>Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking, 1965), p. 150, and "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 342.

<sup>62</sup>*Pragmatism*, pp. 24, 33, 192, 193. This juxtaposition of passages is suggested by Cornforth, *In Defense of Philosophy*, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup>Harry K. Wells, *Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism* (New York, 1954), pp. 132-33.

<sup>64</sup>Letter to Theodore Flournoy, June 17, 1898, quoted in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Briefer Version (New York, 1964—originally published in 1948 as briefer version of a work published in 1935), p. 245.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>66</sup>"The Moral Equivalent of War," *War and Morality*, ed. Richard Wasserstrom (Belmont, Calif., 1970), p. 11.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup>"Speech at the Peace Banquet," *A William James Reader*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen (Boston, 1971).

<sup>69</sup>*Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism*, p. 131.

<sup>70</sup>The articles were later collected into a book: *Individualism Old and New* (New York, 1962 [originally published 1930]). The quotation is from page 54, and he talks of one aspect of the contradiction between social production and private appropriation on page 58: "... while there is much planning of future development with a view to dividends within large business corporations, there is no corresponding coordinated planning of social development."

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>74</sup>Reprinted in *The Meaning of Marx*, ed. Sidney Hook (New York, 1934). Quotations are from pages 86 and 87.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>78</sup>*Liberalism and Social Action* (New York, 1963 [originally published 1935]), p. 48.

<sup>79</sup>Interview with Mussolini in *Sunday Times* (London), April 11, 1926. Quoted in Perry, *Thought and Character of William James*, p. 317.

<sup>80</sup>*Liberalism and Social Action*, p. 21.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 60, 59.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>92</sup>Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York, 1976), pp. 180, 181.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>95</sup>George Novack, *An Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy: Pragmatism versus Marxism* (New York, 1975), pp. 230, 231.

<sup>96</sup>*In Defense of Philosophy*, p. 207.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>98</sup>Paper presented at the Second Inter-American Congress of Philosophy (December 1947), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 207. Cornforth introduces the quotation with the words, "Some European readers may think the professor was trying to be funny; but no, he was perfectly serious."

<sup>99</sup>See "Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions: Part 1: Revolution in Colonial Countries," *Revolution*, Vol. 3, Nos. 7-8 (April/May 1978), for an explanation of the theory behind this.

<sup>100</sup>Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou, "Introduction" to John Dewey, *Lectures in China, 1919-1920* (Honolulu, 1973), p. 8.

<sup>101</sup>This was the title of an article written by Hu in the summer of 1919 (see *ibid.*, p. 14)

<sup>102</sup>Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 175.

<sup>103</sup>Quoted in Clopton and Tsuin-chen, "Introduction," p. 26.

<sup>104</sup>*The German Ideology, Part One, with Selections from Part Two and Three and Supplementary Texts*, ed. with intro. by C.J. Arthur (New York, 1970), p. 64. See *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, near the end of Section 2, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 125; and cf. p. 47.

<sup>105</sup>Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York, 1957), p. 331.

<sup>106</sup>Jay Lovestone, "The 1928 Elections," *The Communist* (December 1928), pp. 145-46; *Revolutionary Age* (November 15, 1929), p. 1. The latter publication was the paper which the Lovestoneites put out after their expulsion from the CPUSA. It is worth noting that somewhat later the former Lovestoneites were to be found in the front ranks of straight-forward traitors and reactionaries, as professional informers, anti-communist "labor leaders," etc. One of them (Will Herberg) went into theology and ended up in the 1950s as an editor of William Buckley's notoriously reactionary *National Review*.

<sup>107</sup>"On the Character of World War 2" and "On the Origins of World War 2," *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1976) and Vol. 2, No. 1 (Fall/Winter 1977). The quotation is from page 60 of the latter.

<sup>108</sup>The first quotation is from a campaign biography of Browder by M.J. Olgin, serialized in the *Daily Worker* (quote from issue of October 5, 1936), and the second is attributed to Robert Minor by Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (New York, 1962), p. 340. In this incredible campaign biography, here is how Olgin recounts the growing-up of Browder to become a proletarian hero:

"Young Earl becomes a cash boy in a department store. . . . But the boy is intelligent. He is quick to learn. He makes progress in his work. From cash boy he becomes telegraph messenger.

At fifteen he is an errand boy in a wholesale drug house. . . . but he rises steadily; from errand boy to office boy, to ledger clerk to book-keeper, and finally, at the age of twenty-one, he is chief accountant of the whole business.[!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!]"

<sup>109</sup>Earl Browder, *Victory and After* (New York, 1942), pp. 112-13.

<sup>110</sup>Earl Browder, *Teheran and America*, quoted by Jacques Duclos, "On the Dissolution of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.," *Marxism-Leninism vs. Revisionism* (New York, 1946), p. 22. The Duclos article originally appeared in the April 1945 issue of *Cahiers de Communisme*, the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of France. It is reprinted in *Marxism-Leninism vs. Revisionism* with other documents and articles by William Z. Foster, Eugene Dennis and John Williamson after Browder's expulsion from the CPUSA.

<sup>111</sup>Browder, Bridgeport Speech, printed in *The Communist* and quoted in Duclos' article, *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>112</sup>"Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 87.

<sup>113</sup>*Teheran and America*, quoted by Duclos, *Marxism-Leninism vs. Revisionism*, p. 24.

<sup>114</sup>From the introduction to the statutes of the CPA, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>115</sup>*The American Communist Party*, Howe and Coser, p. 425.

<sup>116</sup>Wells, *Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism*, p. 135.

<sup>117</sup>*ibid.*, p. 144; see also pp. 93, 118, 169, 170.

<sup>118</sup>Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 64.

<sup>119</sup>Wells, p. 172.

<sup>120</sup>For example: "A reformist change is one which leaves intact the foundations of power of the ruling class. . . . A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 344.)

<sup>121</sup>*Revolution*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (June 1978), p. 3.

<sup>122</sup>"Introducing the *Worker*," *The Worker*, [version published by the Jarvis-Bergman "Revolutionary Workers Headquarters"] Vol. 1, No. 2 (April 15-May 15, 1978), p. 4. The article cited in the previous note ("Sharpen Weapon of the Party's Press") quotes and comments on this sentence, and goes more deeply into the whole question of propaganda, broad exposures and waging the ideological struggle which the Jarvis-Bergman headquarters negated.

<sup>123</sup>*The Worker*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (May 15-June 15, 1978), p. 10. Many of the ellipses are in the original.

<sup>124</sup>For a complete account and analysis, see "Reject Revisionism in Unemployed Work," *Revolution*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (March 1978).

<sup>125</sup>For information on this line struggle, see *Communism and Revolution vs. Revisionism and Reformism in the Struggle to Build the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade* (Chicago, 1978), which contains both the "Appeal to the Party Leadership on the Name of the Young Communist League" by a group of persons who later showed themselves as part of the Jarvis-Bergman clique, and the Party's reply to the appeal.

<sup>126</sup>*Revolution*, Vol. 3, Nos. 7-8 (April/May 1978), p. 10.

<sup>127</sup>Davis Cup: see *Revolutionary Communist Youth*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (May 1978), p. 21; Kent State: see *Revolution*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (June 1978), p. 9; Bakke Decision: see *Revolution*, Vol. 3, Nos. 7-8 (April/May 1978), p. 4.

<sup>128</sup>Excerpted in *Revolution* (June and July 1977), and now published in full: *Revolutionary Work in a Non-Revolutionary Situation: Report of the Second Plenary Session of the First Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (1976)* (Chicago, 1978).

# On the Outcome of World War 2 And the Prospects for Revolution in the West

C.R.

*This is the last of three articles dealing with the origins, nature and effects of World War 2 and the role of communists in relation to it. The previous articles appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1 (October '76) and Vol. 2, No. 1 (Winter '77). This article focuses on the closing months of World War 2 and its immediate aftermath in Europe, the focal point of World War 2 and where revolutionary ferment in the imperialist countries was at the highest pitch.*

As the previous articles in this series stressed, the current world situation, characterized by escalating contention between the rulers of the U.S. and the USSR over who will control the imperialist world, is leading rapidly toward a third world war. Such a war will undoubtedly cause untold suffering for the masses and its outbreak will provide further evidence of the bloodsucking, criminal and moribund nature of the imperialist system. But such a war and the deep-going crisis of capitalism which war entails will also give the working class a tremendous opportunity to take advantage of the situation to advance its struggle and perhaps—even succeed in throwing off the yoke of capital. Dealing correctly with such a war is a task of cardinal importance for communists, class-conscious workers and revolutionary-minded people everywhere.

The final months of World War 2 and the transition to the post-war world was a period of struggle and revolutionary ferment containing many lessons of relevance today. The war was perhaps the gravest crisis ever faced by imperialism. As with the previous world war, which opened the gate to proletarian revolution in Russia and led to the development of revolutionary situations in several other countries, WW2 led to successful revolutions in

Eastern Europe, China, Indochina and Korea and to tremendous growth in revolutionary struggle elsewhere.

This was, however, also a period of sharp conflict between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism in the international communist movement, and in several countries—and to a significant extent on the international level—communists made serious mistakes, failing to take full advantage of the crisis. Previous weaknesses in not grasping correctly the class nature of the wartime united front, weaknesses which were rooted in certain revisionist errors arising from pre-war experience and developing in particular after the 7th Congress of the Comintern in 1935, led in many cases to communist parties being ill-prepared for the rapidly changing situation at the close of the war. (On the pre-war period see “On the Origins of World War 2,” *The Communist*, Fall/Winter 1977) In several instances the real possibility of moving forward to proletarian revolution after the war was ignored. Thus, despite the advances the proletariat made during the war, gains were often turned into their opposite as the bourgeoisie was able to successfully restructure the imperialist system on the basis of U.S. domination and in most countries the proletariat found itself still enslaved to the chains of capital.

At the war's end the Soviet Union had successfully beaten back the savage Nazi onslaught. The Red Army was the most important factor in the Allied victory and Soviet strength and prestige were at their highest in history. Yet the Soviet Union had lost 20 million people, including the bulk of the pre-war Communist Party. The economy was devastated, agriculture thrown into chaos and much that was new and exciting about socialism had been under stress and even distorted by the peculiar demands of the war and the necessary alliance with Germany's imperialist rivals. The international situation was perilous: the U.S. and Britain, which had depended upon Soviet power to defeat Germany, now sought a new imperialist peace and this could only be achieved at the expense of the Soviet Union and the masses of working people everywhere. Even in victory the danger of a new war, waged by the strengthened and relatively fresh U.S. military forces against the Soviet Union, was real indeed.

In this difficult situation the Soviet leaders chose to bend every effort to maintain the alliance in order to obtain peaceful conditions for the reconstruction of socialism and consolidation of proletarian power where it was newly won. While generally upholding principle, taking an unyielding stand on questions of primary concern to Soviet security and overall upholding the interests of the world revolution, as in Poland, the Soviet leadership was forced to make important concessions to the U.S. and British rulers. These made it difficult to come to the aid—or in some cases to even sup-

port politically—revolutionary struggles in areas beyond the reach of the Red Army. Moreover, on the basis of this overall correct policy an incorrect tendency also developed which came to view much compromise as capable of guaranteeing peace, denying the fundamentally war-like and parasitic nature of imperialism. And this incorrect view also led to significant errors in underrating the strength of the masses and the possibility of successfully carrying through revolutionary struggle—China is an important example.

The CPs in those countries where the working class did not hold power and where the Red Army could not be relied upon for assistance faced a very different situation. As part of their internationalist duties, these parties had to support the struggle for peace waged by the Soviet Union. But more important was the task of deepening their own struggle and, if possible, moving forward to make revolution. This was not in contradiction to the obligations of proletarian internationalism but was—and still is today—at the heart of this basic principle. As Mao Tsetung noted in an important statement shortly after the war's end:

“... compromise between the United States, Britain and France and the Soviet Union can be the outcome only of resolute, effective struggles by all the democratic forces of the world against the reactionary forces of the United States, Britain and France. Such compromise does not require the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromises at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions.”

The failure to grasp this important and correct principle lay at the root of many of the errors made by communists in the immediate post-war period and, in that specific situation, this dovetailed with revisionist tendencies toward national defensism and bourgeois “patriotism” which pulled the working class toward unity with and capitulation to its own bourgeoisie.

Even leaving aside the errors of the communist parties it was, of course, highly unlikely that at that time the imperialist system would have met its doom. Certainly in the U.S. the bourgeoisie emerged from the war greatly strengthened. But even in this country and in others where the possibility of directly seizing power did not present itself, had the CP stuck to the revolutionary road more closely, the proletariat would have found itself in a stronger position to advance its struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, with our present situation in mind, it is important to

study closely both the positive and negative lessons of that critical time. The problems which present themselves today are those of a pre-war period and it would be impossible and ridiculous to forecast the precise form and exact conditions in which the imperialist war now brewing would conclude. Nonetheless, the lessons of the final period of WW2 show clearly that the ideological and political line which guides the proletariat in preparing for and during a major war is a matter of life and death for the revolution and plays a critical role in just how such a war comes out.

### THE DEFEAT OF GERMANY

1943 marked the decisive turning point in the monumental struggle against the Axis. The defeat of the Nazis at Stalingrad, where Soviet troops battled the Germans from block to block, house to house, even room to room while a massive pincers surrounded and captured or killed over 300,000 German troops, sealed the fate of the Third Reich. This great victory was quickly followed by an even larger one, the destruction of the German salient at Kursk which militarily was even more significant than the more dramatic and politically decisive gains at Stalingrad.

These victories paved the way for opening the longest sustained offensive in modern military history. The Red Army began its counterattack on July 12, 1943 along a 1,500 mile front. By January 5, 1944, four months after Anglo-U.S. forces invaded the Italian mainland and six months before D-Day, Soviet troops penetrated pre-war Poland. Though the Red Army was still up against 70-75% of the total German forces, its superiority grew daily.

The Soviet advance transformed relations among the Allied powers. Before Stalingrad and Kursk, Stalin engaged in sharp struggle with Roosevelt and Churchill over the opening of a second front in the West. This front, necessary to relieve the tremendous pressure which the German war machine, in control of all of continental Europe, had placed on the Soviets, was promised first for 1942, was postponed until 1943 and then delayed once more until 1944. Instead of battling the Germans head on, the Western powers devoted their efforts to side-show operations in north Africa and Sicily.

One reason for the delay was a dispute between the U.S. and Britain over where to open the front. The U.S., hoping to establish predominance in Western Europe and weaken its British partner, was in favor of launching a major invasion of occupied France. The British proposed a foray into the Balkans since, as Churchill is said to have put it, "a Soviet rush" into the area would threaten

Important "English and North American interests."<sup>2</sup> At the Tehran conference the Soviet delegation, led by Stalin, took advantage of this contradiction and threw its support to the American plan, although, for diplomatic reasons, arguing against the British proposal solely on military grounds.

There was also a much more significant reason for the Western delay in opening the second front. The U.S. and British imperialists had never been confident of a Soviet victory and were unwilling to put much effort into saving a society which they hated to their souls. They hoped the war in Russia would wear out both Germany and the Soviets and that they would be able to step in to pick up the spoils. This was a tried and true strategy tested by the U.S. imperialists with impressive results in WW1.\*

This is why U.S. claims that American economic might, manifested in the lend-lease program, won the war for the Soviet Union are so disgusting. As the first article in this series noted, lend-lease was a real concession won by the Soviet Union from its ally. But it was hardly a decisive element in the Soviet victory and the U.S. was always miserly about the assistance granted. U.S. shipments of arms accounted for a mere 4% of total Soviet armaments. During 1943 and 1944 the U.S. lend-leased only 15% and 13% of its munitions and 9% and 8% of its food output to all the allies, including Britain and China as well as the USSR. In 1944 the U.S. lend-leased only 4.6% of its steel and iron production.<sup>3</sup>

It was the Soviet Union, backed by the growing resistance of the masses in the occupied nations, which played the decisive role in the defeat of Germany. The alliance with the U.S. and Britain played a part in this, but only insofar as the self-reliant strength of the Soviet army and people forced Germany's imperialist rivals to abandon their schemes of "sitting on the mountain and watching the tigers fight." This experience clearly shows that in its defense a socialist country must uphold the principle of self-reliance. To make use of contradictions among the imperialists (not even ruling out, in certain limited situations, the acceptance of some aid from imperialists), is a key aspect of the foreign policy of a socialist state, but to make of this an absolute principle and to rely on aid from one group of imperialists to defeat a rival group is, in the final analysis, only to capitulate to imperialism. The growing struggle between the Soviet Union and its allies and the breakup of the "grand alliance" after Germany's defeat testifies to this.

\*It is interesting to note that a recent Soviet publication on the war argues that "blame for the deliberate delay may be laid at the door of British and U.S. reactionary groups" (emphasis added) and not on the bourgeoisie as a class. See G. Deborin, *Secrets of the Second World War*, p. 160.



## THE BREAKUP OF THE "GRAND ALLIANCE"

With the Red Army's advance on Berlin, British and U.S. perceptions of the second front changed rapidly. It was apparent that the Soviet Union might, with the aid of the resistance movements, be capable of defeating Germany alone. In November 1943 an alarmed Roosevelt thought that "by next spring, the way things are going in Russia now, maybe a second front won't be necessary."<sup>4</sup>

This possibility terrified these imperialists. Even before the start of the Soviet counter-offensive U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson noted that if the Russians did most of the fighting, "I think that will be dangerous for us at the end of the war. Stalin won't have much of an opinion of people who have done that [sat on the sidelines] and we will not be able to share much of the postwar world with him."<sup>5</sup> Of course, Stalin's opinion of the U.S. leadership was hardly of consequence to these imperialists. More significant was the prospect pointed to in fear by British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden as early as January 1942: "Russian prestige will be so great that the establishment of Communist governments in the majority of European countries will be greatly facilitated."<sup>6</sup>

In short, the second front had become essential for the U.S. and British rulers more for defense against the Soviet Union and revolution than to defeat Hitler. In fact, shortly before the Normandy landing the British government significantly expanded its intelligence operations against the USSR.\* Only a month before D-Day, Roosevelt's Chief of Staff, Admiral Leahy, warned that in the event of war with Russia the U.S. could at best defend Britain. "In other words," he mourned, "we would find ourselves involved in a war which we could not win."<sup>7</sup>

Despite all this the Soviet Union continued to agitate for the second front. In his 1944 May Day message Stalin insisted that the liberation of Europe still could not succeed without "the joint efforts of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA, by joint blows from the east dealt by our troops and from the west dealt by the troops of our allies. . . There can be no doubt that only this combined blow can completely crush Hitlerite Germany."<sup>8</sup>

As the military situation grew ever more favorable, Stalin actually stepped up efforts to cooperate with his allies. For instance, on the eve of the Yalta conference in early 1945 when a German counter-offensive at Ardennes, the Battle of the Bulge, threatened

\*Of course they made quite a blunder in assigning the famous Soviet agent Philby to head up the operation, which is how we know of these maneuvers today.

to split the Anglo-U.S. forces, the Red Army, with its supply lines still dangerously stretched, obligingly launched an offensive across the Vistula in Poland several weeks ahead of schedule so as to relieve the pressure in the west, in essence opening up another "second front" in the east. In November 1944, on the anniversary of the victory of the October Revolution, Stalin went so far as to declare that "the alliance between the USSR, Great Britain and the United States of America is founded not on casual, transitory considerations, but on vital and lasting interests."<sup>9</sup>

If the Soviet Union was in a position to liberate Europe without an Anglo-U.S. invasion, why did Stalin go to such lengths to push for this invasion and maintain the alliance? In answering this it should first be noted that a fundamental principle which the Soviet Union had learned through its own bitter experience in Poland in 1920 was that revolution is not for export. Although Stalin was eager to utilize the Red Army to assist the workers of the occupied nations in advancing their struggle, it would have been wrong to try to launch a European revolution simply by force of Soviet arms. A Soviet drive through Germany into France would have been disastrous. Far from being welcomed as liberators, the Soviet troops might well have met opposition from forces which might otherwise have been on the side of revolution.

Moreover, the Red Army, while proud and victorious, was also tired. The Soviet people had suffered grievously during the war and Stalin was eager to lighten their burden. If a second front might have this effect, even if not absolutely essential for victory, then, he believed, it was certainly worth struggling for.

But far more important than these considerations was the very real fear that, faced with both the Soviet advance and the development of revolutionary struggle in the occupied countries, the Western allies might make a separate peace settlement with Germany and, together with their former enemy, turn upon the Soviet state.

While there were powerful forces which would have made such a move extremely difficult, not the least of which being the tremendous opposition this would surely have aroused among the people and soldiers of the Western powers, such fears were hardly paranoid delusions. Late in the war Hitler pointed out to his cronies that the only chance for their survival rested upon the fact that "Never in history was there a coalition like that of our enemies, composed of such heterogeneous elements with such divergent aims."<sup>10</sup> And had Hitler fallen and a more "moderate" German regime come to power, a separate peace aimed at containing or destroying the Soviet Union would have been even more possible. In early 1944 representatives of the German military opposition to Hitler attempted to contact British and

American agents in Switzerland to make just such an arrangement. Even after Hitler's suicide on May 1, 1945, when the Reich controlled only a small part of Schleswig-Holstein, (a province in northwestern Germany) the temporary government of Admiral Doenitz desperately sought a deal with the West.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, though the prospect of a separate peace remained unlikely, it could not be ruled out. Indeed, the true loyalties of the British and U.S. leaders had already been revealed by their attitude to Hitler's close partner in butchery, Benito Mussolini. Neither the Americans nor the British had resigned themselves to Mussolini's hostility until the war was well underway. Roosevelt had even sought the Italian dictator's aid as mediator of the conflict in its early stages. In his war memoirs Churchill ventured the view that Mussolini was really

“the Italian lawgiver.’ The alternative to his role might well have been a Communist Italy, which would have brought perils and misfortunes of a different character both upon the Italian people and Europe. . . . Even when the issue of the war became certain, Mussolini would have been welcomed by the Allies.”<sup>12</sup>

The final defeat of Germany only made the situation more difficult, as the entire basis of the alliance itself, the need to defeat the Axis, was eliminated. In 1954 Churchill admitted that when the Nazi troops surrendered he telegraphed Field-Marshal Montgomery “to be careful in collecting the German arms, to stack them so that they could easily be issued again to the German soldiers whom we should have to work with if the Soviet advance continued.”<sup>13</sup>

In spite of Stalin's statements about an alliance based on “vital and lasting interests” the Soviet leaders were well aware of this situation. Such statements were not really declarations of fact but attempts to make it more difficult for the imperialists to get out of the commitments to post-war unity and cooperation which they had made, and to make clear before world opinion the Soviet desire for peace and cooperation. Unfortunately, however, such statements, and in particular the one cited here, also served to spread serious illusions among the masses about the intentions and nature of the U.S. and British rulers. This opened the door for revisionists like Earl Browder in the U.S. (and, a decade later, Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union itself) to jump out with the theory that imperialism had changed, had become more peaceful and democratic, and that capitalism could now grow calmly and

gradually into socialism. In fact, the maneuvers of the Western imperialists revealed that any conjuncture of interest between a socialist country and an imperialist ruling class can *only* be “casual” and “transitory” and is *never* “vital and lasting.”

But the situation was highly complex. While encouraging and assisting the development of the revolutionary forces wherever the Red Army went, and providing some moral and political support to Communist-led resistance movements in the West, the central aim of Soviet policy right after the war was to work toward an international situation of relative peace and improved security in which it would be possible to engage in the tasks of postwar reconstruction.\* This entailed a struggle, mainly in the diplomatic sphere, to maintain the alliance for as long as possible. And this struggle meant that the Soviet Union would have to continue entering into compromises with and making certain concessions to the U.S. and British imperialists.

The people of all countries also hoped that the alliance would continue since they wanted international relations in the postwar world to somehow break with the bankrupt ways which had led to war in the first place. It was essential for communists to unite with the thrust of this sentiment. At the same time, communists had the task of showing how the laws of the imperialist system were responsible for World War 2, and how these laws would still be in operation as long as imperialism exists, thus leading to new wars. As part of this, the efforts of the Soviet Union to maintain the alliance and thus champion the cause of peace made clear that responsibility for new conflicts and the breakup of the alliance must fall squarely on the shoulders of the imperialists.

### THE YALTA CONFERENCE AND THE ATOM BOMB

In early 1945 Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill met in the Crimean town of Yalta to discuss the postwar world. The Soviet Union came to this meeting in a position of strength, having been the main force in defeating Germany and liberating Europe. But this could easily be transformed into a position of weakness were the imperialists able to break the alliance and paint the Soviet Union

\*The necessary strengthening of the Soviet Union was not solely economic. One of the key tasks facing the Soviet workers was the rooting out of significant and influential revisionist currents which had emerged and gained considerable strength in the Soviet party during the war. Unfortunately this effort, though undertaken, was not successful and in 1956 the revisionist elements coalesced under the leadership of Khrushchev, seized power and began to restore capitalism. For more on this process and on the role of the war in its development see *Red Papers 7: How Capitalism Has Been Restored in the Soviet Union and What This Means for the World Struggle*, especially chapter two.

as an aggressor in the eyes of the world's people.

In much of its cold war propaganda the bourgeoisie has portrayed the Yalta talks as a great sellout of the "interests of the free world" to "godless Communism" or "Russian imperialism." Right-wing writers and some liberals have castigated Roosevelt for his limp-wristed stand and inability to outfox Stalin. Roosevelt, others say, was dying and Churchill was too demoralized by the eclipse of the British empire to put up much of a fight against Stalin's ever-growing ambitions.

Of course this is all hogwash. Roosevelt and Churchill were neither traitors nor fools to the imperialists they represented, and Stalin was anything but a new Hitler seeking to overrun Europe. Actually, given the balance of forces at the time of the meeting, with Germany not yet defeated but with Soviet arms liberating most of Eastern Europe and the resistance movements making a major contribution in the West, the negotiations were marked mainly by Soviet moderation and willingness to compromise.\*

At Yalta the three countries reached agreements concerning the occupation and future of Germany, including reparations, on the formation and structure of the United Nations and on the future of Poland, among other things. The Soviet Union compromised with its allies on all these issues except Poland. Here the Western Powers sought to impose upon the Polish people a government dominated by elements from the infamous London exile government which, even as the conference was in session, was waging a guerrilla war against the Red Army, the kind of fight they had refused to wage against the fascists. Yet even here the Soviet delegation agreed to word the accord in a way which would save face for the Western governments.

Far from "seeking to win at the negotiating table what could not be won on the battlefield," the Soviet Union sought instead to protect through cooperation and compromise in negotiations what the Red Army had gained on the battlefield. The Soviets acted according to the policy described before of seeking to maintain the alliance or at least place the stigma of its breakup on the imperialists.

At Yalta the Soviet delegation skillfully took advantage of the sometimes sharp contradictions dividing the U.S. and Britain. Britain, weakened considerably by the war and deep in debt to Washington, sought desperately to maintain its empire and world

\*U.S. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius confessed that "The record of the Conference shows clearly that the Soviet Union made greater concessions at Yalta to the United States and Great Britain than were made to the Soviets."<sup>14</sup> This view has also been given impressive support in the most thorough study of the Yalta proceedings yet published by the American historian Diane Clemens.<sup>15</sup>

position. By contrast the U.S. hoped to supplant the British as the dominant power in Europe and, under the guise of anti-colonialism, to dismantle the British empire and expand its own neo-colonial rule. These contradictory ambitions led to sharp conflicts at the conference over the future of central Europe, the United Nations and the role of France.

Roosevelt, for instance, tried to muster Soviet support against Churchill's colonialist "intransigence." The issue of UN trusteeships greatly agitated Churchill who thought them a device for American dismantling of the British empire. When U.S. Secretary of State Stettinius proposed establishment of this essentially neo-colonialist institution in areas formerly ruled by Britain, Churchill caustically replied:

"I absolutely disagree. I will not have one scrap of British territory flung into that area . . . I will have no suggestion that the British Empire is to be put into the dock and examined by everybody to see whether it is up to their standard."<sup>16</sup>

According to Eden these remarks produced a gleeful response from Stalin:

"Though the Prime Minister's vehemence was a warning signal to the Americans, it appeared to give the most pleasure to Stalin. He got up from his chair, walked up and down, beamed, and at intervals broke into applause. This embarrassed Roosevelt and did not really profit anybody, except perhaps Stalin, who was able to please himself and to point to the division of his Allies at the same time."<sup>17</sup>

There were definite advantages for the Soviet Union in such disputes, yet, at the same time, these were distinctly limited. Looking over the proceedings at Yalta it is easy to see where Stalin sought to manipulate his imperialist allies by encouraging their need to fight each other, but it is more difficult to find concrete gains stemming from this. Of course, if nothing else, such maneuvering did create a generally more favorable atmosphere for the Soviet Union. Still, the agreement on Poland, for example, was won mainly on the basis of Soviet strength in the area and the resultant inability of the imperialists to affect things there and not on the basis of divisions between Roosevelt and Churchill on the question.

The Anglo-U.S. alliance was more solid than Stalin perhaps assumed. This was because it was an unequal alliance reflecting

the new situation after WW2. The war made it apparent that the imperialist system could only be successfully restructured on the basis of U.S. leadership and control. While lesser imperialists like Britain, France and even the defeated Germans might grumble about this and even wage sharp struggle for it to take place on terms more favorable to them, when push came to shove they were forced to accept it. As Eden put it, "If it came to a direct conflict of policies and we had to choose between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, we should no doubt decide that Anglo-American cooperation is more indispensable and the more natural..."<sup>18</sup>

The U.S. too was concerned not to strain relations with Britain. As presidential aide Harry Hopkins stressed, "It was vital for the United States to have a strong Britain because we must be realistic enough to understand that in any future war England would be on America's side and America on England's. It was no use having a weak ally."<sup>19</sup> Imperial Britain might have fallen under the wing of its former colony (the U.S.) but it was still an empire and not an oppressed nation.

Summing up the experience in particular of the Brest-Litovsk treaty Lenin formulated

"a rule which will remain fundamental with us for a long time until socialism finally triumphs all over the world: we must take advantage of the antagonisms and the contradictions that exist between the two imperialisms, the two groups of capitalist states, and play them off against each other."<sup>20</sup>

As this series of articles has shown, employment of this rule was crucial to Soviet foreign policy under Stalin.

But it was not for circumstantial reasons that Lenin pointed to the contradictions between "the two groups" of imperialists. The most critical contradictions among the imperialists are those between rival blocs. The contradictions which divide lesser from more dominant powers within the same bloc are significant, but definitely secondary. This is especially true as the major powers gear up for war and seek to consolidate control over their junior partners. But it was also definitely true that the contradiction between the U.S. and Britain at the close of the war was just such a secondary contradiction with only limited potential for the Soviets to make use of. It was very different from the contradiction between the Anglo-U.S. and German blocs which the Soviet Union had tried to exploit before the war.

To many, Yalta represented a spirit of postwar cooperation. Yet,

soon after, the U.S. rulers accused the Soviet Union of going back on the agreements. It was really the other way around. The U.S. and Britain refused to live up to a single promise made in the Crimea. The new U.S. president, Harry Truman, declared that after Yalta the Russians "could go to hell."<sup>21</sup>

It is often argued that the turn away from U.S.-Soviet cooperation which began the cold war was Truman's personal responsibility. Roosevelt, it is claimed, had been dedicated to a policy of peace and was willing to work with Stalin.\* But actually the Truman administration really just continued Roosevelt's policies under new postwar conditions. As we have seen, Roosevelt's dedication to cooperation was a product of wartime necessity which he was willing and eager to reverse when it was to the advantage of U.S. imperialism. In China, for example, it was Roosevelt, not Truman, who at the end of WW2 rejected the advice of his "China hands" to cooperate with Mao Tsetung and instead dispatched the reactionary Ambassador Hurley to give unqualified support to Chiang Kai-shek, thus unleashing a new civil war in that country, a war which ended in disaster for U.S. imperialism and victory for the Chinese people and the world proletariat.

Both presidents were political representatives of the bourgeoisie, no matter what the differences between them in background and style. Their policies flowed from the objective needs of this class and were never determined according to personal preference.

One area where Truman continued Roosevelt's policy was in development and deployment of the atom bomb. Both presidents went to great lengths to keep word of the new weapon's development away from their Soviet ally, sharing the secret only with Britain. Security precautions surrounding its development were aimed almost entirely at blocking Soviet rather than German espionage.<sup>22</sup> General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, later declared: "There was never from about two weeks from the time I took charge of this Project any illusion on my part but that Russia was our enemy, and the Project was conducted on that basis."<sup>23</sup>

In fact Truman's boldness in breaking the Yalta agreements was conditioned by his knowledge of the bomb's successful development and his conviction that it would intimidate the Soviet Union

\*This view, championed by liberal admirers of Roosevelt, is also given credence by the Soviet revisionists who always point loyally to a "more reasonable" wing of the bourgeoisie for the proletariat to slavishly back. Doborin says that "with Roosevelt's death and Truman's assumption of the presidency, the tendency to toughen the attitude to the Soviet Union gained ascendancy in the U.S. administration." (*op. cit.*, p. 243) This was also the line pushed by the CPUSA, even after Browder was ousted.

and the world's people. Truman deliberately scheduled his Potsdam meeting with Stalin to coincide with the test explosion of the bomb in New Mexico. And it is now certainly clear that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were subjected to this barbarous weapon mainly to impress and frighten the Soviet Union and the peoples of the world. The U.S. imperialists hoped the bomb would force the Soviet leaders to make concessions, and U.S. diplomatic maneuvering was closely tied to its deployment.<sup>24</sup>

These were, of course, idle hopes. While still a terrible weapon of destruction and mass murder, the atom bomb is also, as Mao Tsetung described it, a "paper tiger." The U.S. imperialists were so taken by the awesomeness of their new weapon that they did not even recognize how its use against Japan so late in the war exposed their own hideous features. And it turned out not to be so easy to employ the bomb as a club against the Soviets, since it was one thing to make veiled threats and quite another to make good on them. Indeed, shortly after the war Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov joked about the bomb with the Americans, belittling its utility and thus engaging himself in a little "reverse atomic diplomacy."<sup>25</sup> He and Stalin called the bluff of these nuclear blackmailers. And there was little the imperialists could do or say in response. Use of atomic weapons against the USSR or revolutionary struggles (such as in China) could not decide the military outcome of a conflict and would have galvanized public opinion throughout the world, including in the U.S., against the U.S. imperialists.

### STALIN AND "SPHERES OF INFLUENCE"

The main summation of the Yalta conference and relations between the Soviet Union and the West which the bourgeoisie has propagated is that "we" were sold out or caught napping by an expansionist Stalin. But they have been aided in putting this over by the mirror-opposite position of the Trotskyites and some other "leftists" who complain that the Soviet Union cynically abandoned the international movement in order to engage in a big-power division of the war spoils.\*

As we shall see, the Soviet leadership under Stalin did make errors in fostering false illusions about the possibility of postwar peace, in overestimating the strength of the imperialists, and,

\*The most recent and thorough presentation of this view is the two-volume work by Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform*. Claudin left the revisionist CP of Spain in the early '60s. He makes a number of important and correct criticisms of revisionism but his "leftism" is really a thin disguise for a social-democratic stand. This is revealed in his embracing of Tito's revisionist "national communism."

most important, in encouraging communists in the countries still ruled by imperialism and reaction to make compromises at home similar to those which the Soviet Union found necessary. But the Soviet Union, while bargaining and compromising with the imperialists in order to consolidate gains and defend its borders, did not join with these bandits to carve up the world. In fact, it was the intervention of the Soviet Union in the diplomatic process which made it more difficult for the Western powers to reorder things to their liking. There was no way Stalin could make Roosevelt, Truman or Churchill into principled men who wanted an end to exploitation and oppression. To a great extent he had to deal with the imperialists on their own terms, those of power politics, but within this necessity he was able to maneuver and achieve greater freedom.

One is reminded here of Trotsky's behavior at Brest-Litovsk in 1918. Sent to negotiate a peace with Germany, Trotsky stalled for time and delivered stirring speeches to the German generals which exposed them as imperialists. Of course, this was of little value to the working class since these imperialists listened politely to the tirades and, losing patience, launched a new offensive which forced a peace settlement on even more unfavorable terms for the new workers state. Stalin, as is well known, was no Trotsky. He was willing to soil his hands by sitting down to bargain with these vampires, even chatting jovially with them, if real gains could be made. Errors were certainly possible in this situation—and Stalin made some errors, even some serious ones—but the possibility of making mistakes is no excuse for a communist to shy away from a difficult yet necessary task.

A somewhat apocryphal story told by Churchill reveals the intricacy of the situation and is very often dragged out to "prove" that Stalin was indeed an imperialist himself, seeking only to carve out a Russian sphere of influence. According to Churchill (and this story has never been denied), he met with Stalin on October 9, 1944:

"The moment was apt for business, so I said, 'Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Romania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have 90% predominance in Romania, for us to have 90% of the say in Greece, and go 50-50 about Yugoslavia?' While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Romania: Russia 90% The others 10%

Greece: Great Britain (in accord with USA) 90%

Russia 10%

Yugoslavia: 50-50%, Hungary: 50-50%

Bulgaria: Russia 75% The others 25%

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down. . . . After this there was a long silence. The pencilled paper lay in the center of the table. At length I said, 'Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand manner? Let us burn the paper.' 'No, you keep it,' said Stalin."<sup>26</sup>

But does this story really indicate that Stalin joined with Churchill to carve up the Balkans? What, after all, did such figures mean? Were they in reference to the nature of the social systems to be established in these countries? Were they to reflect troop dispositions? If so, they were already completely irrelevant. These figures can only be taken to indicate the broad perimeters of very limited kinds of *diplomatic* influence to be carried by each of the relevant powers and even this must be understood in a broader context of military force, negotiation, compromise and struggle. Actually Stalin's flippant attitude to the whole business is most sensibly explained by recognizing that this conversation was really pretty frivolous. Imagine, a tick of a pencil transforms a communist into an imperialist! Indeed, it is hardly surprising that these percentages ended up bearing very little relation to the actual outcome of events in the affected countries.

Of course, the actions of the Soviet Union in relating to its imperialist allies really did affect the fate of millions in the formerly occupied lands. And here in particular it must be said that Stalin made errors. At one point he is reported to have said that "this war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes his own social system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."<sup>27</sup> To a great extent, of course, this was true. Certainly in Eastern Europe the Red Army played a pivotal role in enabling the people there to develop the struggle against the occupying regime into a broad social upheaval which succeeded in bringing these nations under the rule of the working class. But while the presence of Soviet guns was decisive, socialism was not simply *imposed* by the Red Army but was won through complicated struggles which differed from country to country.\*

Stalin tended to make an absolute rule of his observation. To a certain extent he lost faith in the ability of the masses of workers themselves to make revolution and tended to exaggerate the influence and importance of the major armies alone. In Western Europe the presence of U.S. troops was an extremely important factor, but it need not have been, at least in all cases, the decisive factor. Stalin's failure to fully recognize this was an error which led him to somewhat overestimate the strength of the imperialists in Western Europe and elsewhere and, perhaps, to make more concessions to them than necessary. But this error ran counter to his overall correct and generally successful conduct of diplomacy at this time. However, when Stalin's errors were mechanically repeated, actually magnified, by communists in the capitalist countries—to some extent at Soviet insistence but mainly on the basis of the growth of revisionism in their own ranks—the results were disastrous.

#### THE COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE RESISTANCE

In the occupied countries of Europe the movement to resist Nazi rule was, objectively, inextricably joined to the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. In most of these countries mass movements developed and played an important part in the liberation of Europe. The people did not fight simply to bring back the old regimes. All over, resistance to German occupation developed into a struggle for very broad social change, even though this was not often articulated as a demand for socialism (including and especially, as we shall see, by communists). One British diplomat noted that by late 1944, "the main tendency was to the Left and eagerness to raise the banner of revolution in Europe was widespread."<sup>28</sup>

The growing influence of the communist parties and the general bankruptcy of the great majority of bourgeois parties and political leaders testified to this desire of the masses to do more than "save the nation" and return to the old order. In most countries the bourgeois parties, including most of the social-democratic groups, were shattered by the Nazis and their organizations disintegrated. The bourgeois "resistance" was generally centered in the rather in-

\*The establishment of socialist states in many countries of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War 2 was, of course, one of the most significant results of the war. Because of the centrality of the role of the Red Army in most of these countries, the class struggle developed along much different lines than in the West, on which this article focuses. The errors that characterized many of the communist parties in Western Europe undoubtedly had their reflection in some of the Eastern European countries as well, however this is a question that requires further investigation and study.

effective exile "governments" established in London. By contrast, the communist parties grew rapidly in numbers and influence. In Austria the Communist Party grew from 16,000 members in 1935 to 150,000 in 1948. In Italy the party had a mere 12,000 members in 1924 but grew to 402,000 in July 1944 and 2,068,000 by the end of 1946. In France the CP had a prewar peak of 328,000 members in 1937 and this declined sharply after the Nazi-Soviet pact and the errors made by the party around this.\* But by 1946 the French Party had 1,034,000 members. In Belgium the CP grew tenfold and in the Netherlands it more than tripled its electoral vote.<sup>29</sup>

In this excellent situation, however, most communist parties failed to stick firmly to the high road of revolution. They tended to limit the content of the united front to the national struggle. It was correct for these parties to tactically unite with certain bourgeois forces, like De Gaulle in France, who opposed the Nazis for their own imperialist aims. But the parties did more than this. They united as well with the bourgeois definition of the struggle as fundamentally a fight for the survival and independence of their nations, in essence for the restoration of the rule of the domestic bourgeoisie. This they presented as a separate stage of the revolution, a struggle for national liberation and democracy, as if these were colonial countries and not imperialist ones. On this basis they tended to abandon the principle of proletarian leadership of the united front. As a result, considerable support which the parties built was based narrowly upon their role as the best fighters for the "nation," the only real nationalists. Such support could not be solid and much of it evaporated as the terms of the struggle changed.

To understand the weaknesses of the communist parties in this period it is essential to grasp why the struggle of the masses in occupied Europe was never, fundamentally, a struggle for national independence and survival, nor could it have been. The resistance movements needed to be an integral part of the struggle for socialism, although conditioned by the particularities of the occupation regimes and the international situation in which the Soviet Union was allied with U.S. and British imperialism against the main enemy, German imperialism, after the overall character of the war changed with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

After the occupation of Western Europe, the immediate target of the people's struggle in these countries were the new occupation regimes which now represented the state power of the capitalist class. In essence, these regimes were not the enemy because they were *German* but because they were *capitalist*. In this situation it

\*See the first article in this series, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1976).

was necessary and correct to tactically unite with those segments of the domestic bourgeoisie which refused to collaborate, as part of uniting all who could be united and aiming blows at the main enemy. And such unity did restrict somewhat the proletariat's ability to bring out its own independent interests and its final goal in the struggle. But it did not change these. Nor did such a tactical alliance mean that the proletariat could abandon its leading position. The invasion of the Soviet Union changed the overall character of the war and in so doing increased the necessity to tactically unite with bourgeois forces as part of the international united front (which was also a tactical united front). But this invasion too did not and could not change the proletariat's *strategy* of taking advantage of the war-time situation to move forward to the revolutionary seizure of power where possible. For the working class in the capitalist and imperialist countries the strategic goal of the resistance movements should have been socialist revolution and not national liberation.

Of course to a great degree the resistance took on the *form* of a national revolutionary war, but not a national war of the progressive bourgeois variety that Marx and Engels supported in the 19th century. Indeed, revolutionary national struggles are, with the exception of oppressed nations and national minorities within these countries, a thing of the past in advanced capitalist countries. Lenin pointed out repeatedly that Marx and Engels were "working on the problem at a time when there existed indubitably *progressive bourgeois* movements, which moreover did not merely exist, but were in the forefront of the historical process in the leading states of Europe." By WW2, however, this was not the case. As Lenin put it during the first world war,

"Today, it would be ridiculous even to imagine a progressive bourgeoisie, a progressive bourgeois movement, in, for instance, such key members of the 'Concert' of Europe, as Britain and Germany... one cannot even imagine bourgeois progressive movements, whether modestly liberal or tempestuously democratic, in Britain, Germany, or France."<sup>30</sup>

Of course, Lenin did recognize that under a peculiar set of circumstances there might still be a national war in Europe—as opposed to an imperialist war—fought by "a number of viable national states" against an imperialist power which had subjugated them. But for Lenin this was not only "improbable" but "would hurl Europe back several decades" because such a war would still find the bourgeoisie in the forefront or at least delay the question



of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat.<sup>31</sup>

In WW2 several states were subjugated by Germany but the situation was not like the one Lenin deemed possible but improbable. The occupation of Europe occurred during a war in which the nature and objectives of the bourgeoisies of the occupied states remained, and could only remain, imperialist.\* Although the *overall* character of the war had changed with the German attack on the Soviet Union, for the imperialist bourgeoisie the war remained an extension of their imperialist politics. In the occupied countries only the working class could lead the struggle in a thoroughgoing, revolutionary way. For some sections of the bourgeoisie, resistance could only be aimed at a restoration of their lost paradise of exploitation, while other powerful sections of the ruling classes collaborated with the Nazi occupiers.

Because the revolutionary interests of the working class stood so sharply in contrast to the self serving actions of the bourgeoisie (in both its resistance and its collaboration) the proletariat was in an excellent position to put itself at the head of the resistance movement of the masses and lead it forward toward socialism. But to the extent that the communists accepted the bourgeois definition of the struggle in the imperialist countries as one simply for national salvation, they surrendered leadership to the bourgeoisie. For while the working class was in the forefront of the fight against the occupiers, from a strategic viewpoint it was the bourgeoisie and not the working class that represented "the interests of the nation" in the imperialist countries. By and large in much of occupied Western Europe it was the errors of the communist parties in viewing the struggle against the occupiers as a whole separate historic stage which put the bourgeoisie in command. Such an outcome was far from an inevitable product of the objective situation and nature of the struggle.

Even in countries where the struggle today *is* for national liberation, and the proletariat's strategy correctly includes unity with the patriotic national bourgeoisie against imperialism and its feudal and comprador bourgeois lackeys, it is still incorrect to separate the national from the class struggle and deny the leading role of the working class. An Albanian historian has summed up the experience in WW2 of that (in many ways formerly semi-feudal, semi-colonial) country where, under the correct leadership of Enver Hoxha, the Communist Party successfully combined the

\*According to Lenin "a war *between* imperialist Great Powers (i.e., powers that oppress a whole number of nations and enmesh them in dependence on finance capital, etc.), or *in alliance* with the Great Powers is an imperialist war." ("A Caricature of Marxism," *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 34)

national struggle against the invader with the domestic class struggle, advancing to a successful socialist revolution. The Albanian experience and the experience of national liberation movements everywhere, he argues, shows that

"... it is impossible to avoid a combination, to this or that extent, between the war for national liberation and the war for social liberation, between the war against the external imperialist enemies and the struggle against the internal reactionary enemies. The international bourgeoisie uses all its forces and means to prolong the lifespan of the world capitalist system. Imperialism is trying every means to preserve its positions, irrespective of the new forms of domination it applies, at the same time, sparing nothing to defend the exploiting capitalist system of each separate country. On the other hand, the landowners and the reactionary bourgeoisie of this or that country, mortally afraid of the revolution, are trying every means to find a base of support in one big imperialist power or the other, paying the highest price for this support, with part or the whole of their national independence and sovereignty. For this reason it is difficult to have a liberation war or revolution which is spearheaded just against the foreign enemy or just against the internal enemy, taken separately. The struggle will inevitably be waged against both one and the other enemy simultaneously, that is, it will be a combined one."<sup>32</sup>

The line that the resistance movements in the advanced capitalist countries were fundamentally struggles for national independence created much of the basis for the line that cooperation between the working class and the bourgeoisie was necessary and desirable in the post-war period. This was preached most boldly by Earl Browder\* in the U.S. but had considerable influence in most of the communist parties, especially in Western Europe. Instead of seeking to take advantage of the widespread turmoil and desire for change and on this basis move forward to revolution, many par-

\*The notorious revisionist betrayal of Earl Browder needs little recounting: the dissolving of the Communist Party, the preaching of a new era of peaceful collaboration between imperialism and the Soviet Union and between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries, the utter abandonment of the goal of socialist revolution, and so forth. More thoroughly summing up the history of the CPUSA including the Browder period remains an important task for revolutionary communists in the U.S.



ties, blinded by their characterization of the struggle as one for national salvation, called instead for national reconstruction and class collaboration. They entered bourgeois governments—not to make certain tactical moves to sabotage these from within as a secondary aspect of their policy, which must first and foremost depend on mobilizing the masses in revolutionary struggle—but to assist in restoring stability.

This line also found a basis in the position of the Soviet Union discussed previously. The necessity for the Soviet Union to compromise with the imperialists reinforced both rightist tendencies and the treachery of outright revisionism in the CPSU and in other parties, acting as a further justification for essentially sellout policies. It was argued that the proletariat in the capitalist countries had to forego the possibility of making revolution and instead consolidate the national victory (i.e., consolidate the newly regained rule of their “own” bourgeoisie) in the interest of protecting the Soviet Union from a new imperialist attack. This line made an absolute rule of the internationalist duty to defend socialist countries, even where this vital task was in short-term contradiction with the even more fundamental task of making revolution. Defense of socialist countries is an extremely important part of proletarian internationalism, but such internationalism can never be limited to this. As Stalin himself stressed immediately after Lenin’s death:

“Lenin never regarded the Republic of Soviets as an end in itself. He always looked on it as an essential link for strengthening the revolutionary movement in the countries of the West and the East, an essential link for facilitating the victory of the working people of the whole world over capitalism. Lenin knew that this was the only right conception, both from the international standpoint and from the standpoint of preserving the Republic of Soviets itself.”<sup>32a</sup>

Denial of this truth contributed to the rise of revisionism. To deny the centrality of the *class struggle* and to pin all hopes on the *socialist states* is ultimately to retreat into Khrushchev’s traitorous line of “peaceful competition” between rival systems leading directly to the line of “peaceful transition” to proletarian rule.

#### FRANCE: PRODUCTIVITY AND PATRIOTISM

The French Communist Party (PCF) was the only European CP

to enter the war in a state of legality. In the prewar popular front the PCF had come to the brink of participating in a bourgeois government and its developing orientation toward legal and parliamentary methods of struggle greatly influenced its behavior.

During the resistance the PCF entered a united front with the bourgeois forces represented by De Gaulle. As the first article in this series noted, before the invasion of the Soviet Union the French communists erred by taking into consideration only the overall imperialist character of the war at its outbreak but not the particular development of German occupation and the consolidation of a pro-German state power in France (direct German rule in the North and the nazi-controlled Vichy regime in the South). At this point the French party’s propaganda correctly labelled Gaullism “a fundamentally reactionary and anti-democratic” movement but stressed also that its aim was to rob France “of all her freedom in the event of an English victory,” a stand which, in the context of the party’s overall work, let the German occupiers completely off the hook.<sup>33</sup>

After the invasion of the Soviet Union, however, the party did a complete flip, not only uniting with but tailing behind De Gaulle. In early 1943 the PCF newspaper, *L’Humanite*, stated: “We are reflecting the feelings of Frenchmen in proclaiming our confidence in General De Gaulle, who was the first to raise the standard of the resistance.”<sup>34</sup> This one-sided view ignored the crucial struggle which the working class was waging *against* the Gaullists and the bourgeoisie for leadership of the resistance. In fact, the PCF went out of its way to build up De Gaulle’s influence. His French Committee for National Liberation (CFLN) was embraced uncritically by the party despite the fact that, as a later PCF history of the resistance noted, it consisted mainly of “the men sent by the bourgeoisie to obtain their credentials as ‘resistance fighters’ and to ensure the safeguarding of their interests.”<sup>35</sup>

The Communist Party was the only organized political party active in the French resistance, and, while attempting to unite with De Gaulle, it was also very active in developing its own independent forces. De Gaulle did not want the party represented on the CFLN if it were to be the only political party and thus earn for itself the title “party of the resistance.” He proposed that other prewar political groups, most of which had disintegrated in 1940 and all of which were thoroughly bourgeois, be reconstituted and granted representation on the CFLN on the same basis as the PCF.

This raised an uproar in the resistance. As one non-communist resistance paper put it, “It seems right and proper that the Communists should be represented on the liberation committee because they are actively engaged in the common struggle, but it would be hard to accept the presence of representatives of the old

movements."<sup>36</sup> De Gaulle's ploy provided a real opportunity to expose the Gaullists and the bourgeoisie as the real saboteurs of unity and to raise the question of the final goal of the struggle. But the party failed to take advantage of the situation and instead supported the proposal, later explaining that "political life in France is traditionally expressed in broad currents which are one of the characteristic features of French bourgeois democracy" and these currents must be represented by organized parties.<sup>37</sup> What is ignored here is that one of the "characteristic features" of a developing revolutionary situation is the breakdown and collapse of those parties of the bourgeoisie which formerly held the allegiance of the masses. By refusing to look at the struggle in terms which went beyond the restoration of bourgeois democracy, the PCF was preparing the way for a return to power by the French bourgeoisie.

Yet despite these errors the PCF played a leading role in the resistance. As allied troops approached Paris in August 1944 the party organized a mass insurrection all over France which contributed greatly to the defeat of the occupiers. Indeed, to a very great extent, France was liberated by the French people themselves.<sup>38</sup> In Paris the communists stubbornly struggled with the Gaullists who wished to wait passively for the U.S. tanks. Starting with few weapons the Parisian masses fought in the tradition of the glorious Commune of 1871 and by the time the allies arrived they had captured thousands of German guns. The southwest was also a hotbed of insurrection and communist support. Here the masses overthrew the Vichy authorities themselves and established committees of the resistance as revolutionary organs of government. Everywhere it was the working class which bore the brunt of the battle. In Paris, barricades appeared on most every block in the working class districts, but there were none on the fashionable Champs-Elysees. The French bourgeoisie were cowering in their homes and, as one writer put it, "they prayed for De Gaulle to come to the rescue of that Law and Order which the Germans were so hastily abandoning."<sup>39</sup>

Their prayers were not in vain. As soon as De Gaulle entered the capital he headed straight for the old Ministry of War, for, as he put it, "I wished to establish that the state, after ordeals which had been unable either to destroy or enslave it, was returning, first of all, quite simply, to where it belonged."<sup>40</sup> Snubbing the leaders of the resistance, communist and non-communist alike, he then proceeded to Notre Dame Cathedral to celebrate a mass presided over by notoriously pro-Vichy clergy. De Gaulle, backed by the U.S., hoped to reestablish the old regime, but key to this was disarming the resistance fighters, who were organized into the *gardes patriotiques* (patriotic militia, a name which itself reflected weaknesses in the Party's line) which represented the armed power

of the masses.

At first De Gaulle moved with caution. He joined the U.S. command in drastically cutting supplies to fighters still in German-held territory. Since the resistance had called on its members, where possible, to join the national army, he got Eisenhower to outfit 137,000 former Resistants as part of this arrangement. These men were given outmoded equipment, assigned menial tasks and shipped to isolated regions which many dubbed "concentration camps." Eisenhower also transferred one French division to De Gaulle for the expressed purpose of maintaining internal order.<sup>41</sup>

By October 1944 disarmament of the *gardes patriotiques* was the central question of French political life. On October 27, 1944 PCF leader Jacques Duclos declared that "The patriot militias must remain the watchful guardians of the republican order while at the same time taking active charge of the military education of the popular masses."<sup>42</sup> The next day De Gaulle replied by dissolving the militias. The two communist ministers in the provisional government protested, but did not withdraw from the cabinet. The party secretly ordered the militia units to maintain their organization and not surrender their arms but secretly store them instead. This was good so far as it went, but the party leaders failed to mobilize the masses to take on this very serious attack openly, in a mass, offensive way. Indeed, the whole question of the dual power which existed in France after the Paris insurrection and the rising in the Vichy areas was treated by the PCF in a way strikingly similar to how the Mensheviks treated the relationship between the Soviets and the Provisional Government in Russia after the February 1917 revolution. There is ample evidence that the French masses themselves were beginning to deal with the resistance committees as organs of popular government. But the PCF leaders were more concerned with maintaining good relations with De Gaulle and obtaining posts in the cabinet he would form. For them the resistance organizations were, at most, pressure groups which could influence and support the "real" government of the bourgeoisie.

On November 6 De Gaulle announced a pardon of Maurice Thorez, the General Secretary of the PCF who had been convicted of treason early in the war. Through this pardon Thorez was enabled to return home from Moscow. This seemed like a concession aimed, perhaps, at confusing people in the wake of the attack on the militia. But Thorez, who later, in 1956, would lead the PCF completely into the revisionist swamp, shocked everyone when immediately upon his return he joined De Gaulle in urging the complete dismantling of the militias and of the resistance committees as well! His slogan was "one state, one police force, one army."

"These armed groups," he declared several months later to the PCF's Central Committee, "had their *raison d'être* before and during the insurrection against the Hitlerite occupation and its Vichy accomplices. But the situation is now different. Public security is to be guaranteed by regular police forces constituted for this purpose."<sup>43</sup>

"Public security" was, of course, hardly at issue. While it was probably likely that an attempt at insurrection could not yet have succeeded in 1944, before the final defeat of Germany (although even this is somewhat problematic), this was surely no reason to abandon a revolutionary armed force which might have been capable of challenging the bourgeoisie in more favorable circumstances later. Disarmed by their all too narrow definition of the resistance struggle in the first place, the PCF leaders now proved unwilling to risk a struggle for power in the reformist hope that the illusion of power in the form of positions in government might yield more profitable and immediate results. This was a major step onto the timeworn path of class collaboration paved by the social-democrats during WW1.

And the worst was yet to come. With Thorez' return the party adopted as its central task the notorious "battle for production," in which the French working class was supposed to express its deep-felt patriotism. At the 10th Congress of the PCF in June 1945, the "production congress," Thorez took a cue from his social-democratic predecessors, arguing that French workers should not make excessive demands or strike since it was in the interest of the bourgeoisie to disrupt a government which had within it socialist ministers. "Where does the mortal danger for our country lie?" he asked. "It is in the field of production. . . . If the trusts and their agents oppose the effort for reconstruction and production this means that it is in the interest of the people, of the working class, to work and produce, in spite of and against the trusts."

It was, in fact, as if Thorez felt he was still in Moscow, emphasizing postwar reconstruction and the restoration of socialist industry (and, it should be added, doing so in a seriously erroneous way, stressing that success in revolution is measured by and depends upon success in production). Thorez, trade union leader Benoit Frachon, Jacques Duclos\* and other PCF leaders travelled

\*It may surprise some to find Jacques Duclos named as a major champion of the revisionist line since he authored the famous open letter to the CPUSA, exposing Earl Browder's revisionism. This letter greatly strengthened those in the U.S. party who were increasingly opposed to Browder and spurred his overthrow and the party's reconstitution. The Duclos letter was circulated widely as a major document of the struggle. Yet the letter did not contain a very thorough critique of Browderism. It focused overwhelmingly on Browder's dissolution of the CP but accepted others of his revisionist theses. Duclos applauded, for in-

tirelessly around the country, suppressing efforts by the workers to stand up for their economic and political interests against the capitalists. As Thorez put it, the production battle was at the heart of the continuing struggle for national survival and independence: "The task is to rebuild the greatness of France, to secure in more than words the material conditions of French independence."<sup>44</sup>

There was opposition to this revisionist line, however. Two of the most active communists in the resistance, Andre Marty and Charles Tillon, protested vigorously within the party (although the Marty-Tillon line also deviated somewhat from a thoroughly proletarian stand). They were later expelled. Among the masses, too, there was opposition. The coal miners of Waziers in the North launched an impressive wave of strikes, Thorez had to personally rebuke rank and file communists for leading these. After all, he confessed, "We are for the revolution, tomorrow. While waiting, today, we wish the capitalist system to function according to its own laws. . . ."<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps the most disgusting aspect of the PCF's capitulation to the bourgeoisie under the cover of "national reconstruction" was its support for the suppression of revolts in the French colonies. In 1942, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov met with De Gaulle. Hoping to unite with this French nationalist against the Anglo-U.S. bloc, Molotov agreed to publicly concede that the people of the French colonies should accept De Gaulle's leadership (instead of the Vichy regime). Mechanically adopting this concession as their own, the PCF leaders ceased to raise the demand for unconditional independence for the colonies but instead redefined the party's policy as designed "to create the conditions for a union in freedom, trust and brotherhood between the colonial peoples and the people of France."

Nominally, the PCF continued to support the principle of self-determination but stressed that "the right to divorce does not mean the obligation to divorce."<sup>46</sup> Such a statement is, of course, appropriate where the national question is a "particular and internal state question," as was the case in Czarist Russia (and is the case with the Black nation in the U.S. today). But with regard to the colonial question, this is nothing but a straight-up cover for imperialism.

Thus, when French imperialism viciously suppressed the May 1945 rebellion in Algeria in which 40,000 Algerians were killed,

stance, the CPUSA's endorsement of Roosevelt in the 1944 election. After Thorez, Duclos was the prime formulator and implementer of the PCF's revisionist line. And he remained a faithful servant of the bourgeoisie to the end, as when he represented the revisionist party in the bogus elections which followed the PCF sabotage of the May-June 1968 uprising and general strike.

Thorez replied (a month later) with the following lily-livered "protest":

"In Algeria, after the painful events of last month, the most urgent task is to improve the food supply, lift the state of siege, dismiss the officials appointed by Vichy and punish the traitors who have provoked hunger strikes after feeding the enemy for two years. . . . A democratic France must help in the development of the Algerian nation which is in the process of being formed."<sup>47</sup>

Imagine, suddenly the Algerian nation no longer even exists but is only "being formed"! In the same speech Thorez bemoaned increased repression in French-held Syria and Lebanon, whose peoples had also demanded independence. Referring to this he declared that "we regret all the more the blow struck at our traditional prestige and the interests of our country in the Near East." Apparently for Thorez a truly "prestigious" imperialism need not resort to violence.

And then there was Vietnam. Here the French army reestablished—without the slightest protest by the PCF—the colonial regime in opposition to the independent republic proclaimed under the communist leadership of Ho Chi Minh. On November 23, 1946 the French fleet shelled Haiphong harbor, killing 6000 people and beginning French imperialism's long, losing fight against the heroic Vietnamese people. This war was waged for six months by a French government which included five communist ministers, one of whom, Thorez, was the Communist Party's leader. From January 1947 until the removal of the PCF from the government with the institution of the Marshall Plan, the Minister of Defense was a communist. In March 1947 the National Assembly voted military credits for this bloody colonialist war. The communist deputies just abstained, but the PCF ministers voted in favor in order to maintain "government solidarity." According to Duclos, one rationale for this despicable act of social-chauvinism was that the four-power conference of foreign ministers (of Britain, the U.S., the USSR and France) was set to begin in Moscow. A split in the French government might make things more difficult for the Soviet Union. And, after all, Duclos noted, "our foreign minister will be defending the cause of France!"<sup>48</sup>

Thorez and the PCF's efforts on behalf of the "national cause" were much appreciated by De Gaulle:

"As for Thorez, even in his efforts to advance the Communist cause, he will serve the national interest

on a number of occasions. His constant call is for the maximum of work and production at any price. I shall not try to understand him. I am satisfied if France is served."<sup>49</sup>

But others of his class were not so far-sighted, accomodating and appreciative. In the spring of 1947, the bourgeoisie throughout Western Europe moved to dismiss the communist ministers. In France the excuse was a major strike at the Renault plants, apparently instigated by Trotskyites and supported by the social-democratic and Christian unions. Prime Minister Ramadier accused the PCF of starting the walkout (falsely, of course) and on May 5 removed the PCF from the cabinet. Among the workers there was some sentiment for a general strike in protest. But Duclos put a quick end to this. "Only fools talk about a general strike now," he declared.<sup>50</sup> Instead, the PCF set out to prove to the mistaken Ramadier that it was, indeed, a true and responsible "party of government." Referring to the dismissal of Thorez, the aging founder of the PCF, Marcel Cachin, asked what unfortunately seems a very appropriate question: "What madness made them get rid of such a statesman?"<sup>51</sup>

#### ITALY: THE MYTH OF "PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRACY"

Unlike in France, the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) had existed in conditions of illegality for more than a generation, but the party was no less infected by the legalist virus. Despite some superficially more revolutionary practice, the Italian party made substantially the same errors as their French comrades with the same results.

Before the fall of Mussolini in 1943, resistance in Italy was concentrated among the communist-led workers of the north. In the spring of 1943 over 100,000 workers struck in Turin, Milan, Genoa and elsewhere. Combined with news of Stalingrad and the allied landing in Sicily, these strikes showed the Italian ruling class that Mussolini's time was up. *Il Duce* was unceremoniously dumped and a new government, headed by the reactionary Badoglio and supposedly pledged to fighting the Nazis, was installed. Its initial task was not to join the fight against Germany but to suppress the revolutionary movement. Badoglio ordered that:

"Any movement must be ruthlessly crushed at the start. . . . Troops will act in combat formation and open fire at a distance, using mortars and artillery, without warning, as if in the face of the enemy. No shots are to be fired in the air for any reason, but at

the body, as in combat."<sup>52</sup>

While Badoglio prepared for civil war against the Italian people, the Germans invaded the country from the north. The new government took no defensive measures, but instead fled south to the protection of the advancing allies.

Italy was now split into two zones. From November 1943 the mass movement and armed action grew rapidly in the territory of the north occupied by Germany, Italy's industrial heartland. Committees of National Liberation (CLN) were formed everywhere including PCI members, socialists, liberals, Christian Democrats and the radical Action Party. The communists, by far the largest and most influential force in these bodies, led the movement. In March 1944 a general strike involving over a million workers broke out over virtually all the territory occupied by the Germans. This was the largest outburst of its kind in any occupied country during the entire war, larger even than the great Slovak uprising of 1943 when communists led the masses in Czechoslovakia in a rebellion against the German occupiers that lasted several weeks. In Turin, center of the auto industry, the strike lasted a week. The partisan movement also grew rapidly. By summer 1944 there were already 100,000 men in combat units. Throughout northern Italy there was a duality of power: Mussolini's puppet "Salo Republic" backed by German guns on one side, the CLN on the other.

In the southern zone the allied armies clamped a tight lid on such mass mobilization. Eisenhower put it firmly: "No political activity whatsoever shall be countenanced during the period of military government."<sup>53</sup> Backed by the British and the U.S., Badoglio reestablished old fascist institutions, explaining with typical bourgeois logic that it was only possible to have an anti-fascist administration "while using the old framework of machinery of local government."<sup>54</sup> As the Allied Control Commission, the liaison with the new government, noted, "The appointment of an efficient man nearly always means the appointment of a Fascist."<sup>55</sup>

At this point the PCI opposed these maneuvers, as did other anti-fascist groups. In January 1944, a joint Congress of anti-fascist organizations including the PCI met at Bari. The Action Party proposed that the Congress demand immediate abdication of the King (who served as figurehead for Badoglio as he had for Mussolini) and constitute itself a representative assembly with legislative power. The liberals, led by the philosopher Benedetto Croce, maneuvered skillfully to oppose this, and the Congress wavered.

On February 22, Churchill made a speech mocking the anti-Badoglio stand of the Bari delegates. In response, the workers of Naples, which had been liberated by an insurrection the day before

Allied troops arrived, called a strike. This was changed to a mass meeting when the U.S. military authorities threatened to suppress the strike by force. On March 14, agitation against the Badoglio government and for the Bari Congress was at its peak. It was at this point that Badoglio announced recognition of his government by the Soviet Union, a step which even the U.S. and Britain had yet to take. Clearly, with the second front still not opened in France, this was a serious concession the Soviet Union felt constrained to make in order to maintain Allied unity.

But it was not necessary for the Italian communists to mechanically and blindly make similar concessions. Yet this is precisely what they did. On March 27, PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti, the "father of eurocommunism" who in 1956 led the PCI to fully embrace revisionism, returned to Italy from Moscow. Years later he confessed that in his view the party had taken "a dangerous path, which could lead nowhere." Instead of the Bari plan he proposed "the postponement of the problem of institutions until it was possible to call the constituent assembly, and the unity, as a priority, of all political tendencies to take part in the war against Germany, in other words, the immediate setting-up of a government of national unity."<sup>56</sup>

This abrupt and drastic change in line was the famed *svolta di Salerno* ("Salerno switch"). Once, under pressure from Croce and Roosevelt, the king indicated his intention to abdicate, the "switch" made it possible to form a unified government with Togliatti himself as Minister of Justice. Although Togliatti's over-eager acceptance of Badoglio and his rejection of the Bari Congress surely had a demoralizing effect on the masses, the "Salerno switch" was not necessarily incorrect in principle. It was probably too dangerous to push for a decisive confrontation with Badoglio and his U.S. backers before the most industrialized sections of the country were even liberated. And the PCI did have to take into account the Soviet Union's need to maintain the alliance; Germany, after all, still controlled much of Europe. But insofar as it was justified, the "Salerno switch" still had to be understood solely as a tactical maneuver and not as a fundamental reorientation of line. Postponing the "problem of institutions" should have meant waiting to see whether and how conditions would ripen for an actual insurrection, while continuing the struggle among the masses and within the new government on a revolutionary basis. But for Togliatti it meant something very different.

Before Togliatti's return an important line struggle had developed in the leadership of the PCI. After the fall of the fascist regime of Mussolini the party center divided itself organizationally into two headquarters. The northern headquarters, located in Milan, was responsible for leading the underground struggle

against the occupation. A southern center, operating out of Rome, directed the primarily legal struggle in the liberated areas. The Rome headquarters, while taking what seemed a "left" position in opposition to the Badoglio government, actually championed a rightist line of relying mainly on a coalition of political parties rather than on the masses mobilized under proletarian leadership to build the movement. The relative weakness of the PCI in the south and the hostile attitude to mass mobilization of the Allied command created a strong basis for the PCI to fall prey to the disease of parliamentarism. As one leader of the southern center later admitted, "In the democratic coalition which is fighting against fascism one cannot see, on the part of these comrades, the internal dynamics of classes and of their changing relationships."<sup>57</sup> In other words, the communists could not grasp the different class interests motivating the various parties and groupings fighting the fascists.

The Milan headquarters, while striving to unite all forces opposed to fascism, emphasized, by contrast, the broadest mobilization of the masses and, as key to this, the centrality of the Party's political leadership. In the north the PCI fought to make the CLN a real organ of popular power and not just a political coalition. They backed this by mobilizing youth groups, women's organizations, peasant committees, etc. They declared the party "rejects any interpretation [of its line] that tends to underestimate the guiding and propelling function that belongs to the Party and the working class in the national front, as well as in any united front."<sup>58</sup>

On his return Togliatti clearly united with the line of the southerners. This was in fact the revisionist essence of the "Salerno switch." Although he rejected the Rome group's "left" opposition to Badoglio, he accepted their fundamental orientation that the struggle was a parliamentary one between and among parties rather than a struggle of *classes*. On this basis the PCI made concession after concession to maintain its presence and influence in the government. It openly admitted this government's failure to achieve the most minimal anti-fascist reforms and deplored the fact that "the government had not fulfilled the Italian people's hopes of renewal."<sup>59</sup> But it remained loyal to the government nonetheless. "If they had allowed themselves to be removed from the government," Togliatti argued, "the CLN parties, and particularly the most advanced, would have compromised the rare conquests they had made."<sup>60</sup> One can only ask, however, what conquests these were and why they were so precious as to justify compromising instead the rare but priceless prospect of revolution?

In the north, acceptance of the "Salerno switch" also meant a turn toward class collaboration. On December 7, 1944, the CLN

leadership signed an agreement with the allied command according to which the partisans undertook to obey British and U.S. instructions on the conduct of the war, to appoint as military leader of the partisan army an Allied "secret officer" and to follow his lead. A PCI history of the resistance offers an illuminating "explanation" of this agreement:

"It seems as if the liberation movement was forced, with this agreement, to make heavy concessions; in reality the Allies simply obtained confirmation that the partisan movement 'would not make a revolution,' which, obviously, was worrying them. In reality, this was not a success for the Allies, but for the Italians. The CLN saw itself officially recognized as not only the *de facto* but also the *de jure* [legal] government in northern Italy."<sup>61</sup>

What a wondrous turn of events! By promising to "not make a revolution" the revolutionaries become the legal government! Can the parliamentary cretinism of modern revisionism be more straightforward than this?

In April 1945, after stalling all winter and leaving the partisans to fight alone, the Allies launched an offensive to free the northern zone. But the partisan army, now over 300,000 strong, and the working class of northern Italy took the lead, liberating nearly all major cities well before the Anglo-U.S. troops arrived. Indeed, according to one former resistance leader, "For ten days, until the arrival of the Allied troops and authorities, the national liberation committees directed the whole political, social and economic life of northern Italy."<sup>62</sup>

But as soon as the advancing Allied forces arrived a veritable counter-revolution took place. Institutions established by the CLN were nullified. Former fascists were returned to office and administrators appointed by the CLN removed. Those possessions and property which had been confiscated from pro-fascist landowners and capitalists were returned.

The partisan forces were in an excellent position to resist these measures. They had captured large quantities of German arms and enjoyed broad support among the masses. On the Austrian border stood the Red Army, to the east the Yugoslavs. But the partisans peacefully permitted the Allies to disarm them. Indeed, the PCI was the first to encourage this. As Togliatti later reminded party activists, "We are all united by our agreement to have no recourse to violence in the struggle between the parties. This agreement calls for the disarming of all, and we were the first to carry it out by taking measures towards this end with the partisan units."<sup>63</sup>

Togliatti offers a pacifist's dream: the disarming of all—except, of course, the bourgeoisie. With this cowardly act the immediate prospect of proletarian revolution in Italy was ended.

Following disarmament of the partisans, events in Italy proceeded much as in France. The masses were still gripped by enthusiasm for a new society and the bourgeoisie struggled to regain control. The PCI, however, fought only to retain its government positions until, predictably, it lost these in 1947. In Italy, unlike in France, however, the party took on a more radical posture in order to more effectively use the mass movement as a pressure group. Rather than resorting to simple exhortations to work hard and produce for the glory of the motherland, as Thorez did, Togliatti put forward a somewhat sophisticated revisionist theory: the line that the goal of the movement was to fight for the establishment of “progressive democracy.” Since this theory is a major source of today’s “eurocommunist” variant of modern revisionism it is worth examining in some detail.

Were the slogan of “progressive democracy” put forward simply to express the concrete programmatic content of the united front against Germany and its Italian lackeys, with the PCI making clear that, in its view, this could only be transitional to a proletarian revolution and socialism, there would be little to quibble over. “Progressive democracy” would be akin to the “people’s democracy” which served as a form of approach to socialism in Eastern Europe coming out of the particular situation of the wartime alliance. But for Togliatti, “progressive democracy” was the goal of a whole separate stage of the revolutionary struggle. The establishment of “progressive democracy”—really just a rejuvenation of the old bourgeois democracy—was put forward as an aim in itself and in *contradiction* to the fight for socialism.

According to Togliatti:

A progressive democracy is one that looks toward the future, not towards the past. A progressive democracy is one that gives no respite to fascism, but destroys any possibility of its comeback. A progressive democracy in Italy would destroy all feudal remnants and would solve the agrarian problem by giving land to the tiller. By preventing the plutocratic groups from concentrating the nation’s resources in their hands, new democracy would prevent them from taking control of the government, from stepping over people’s rights, and from drawing us into tragic, gangster-like adventures.<sup>64</sup>

Of course it is laughable and quite a damning self-exposure that

one of Togliatti’s main beefs against the “plutocrats” (not the bourgeoisie or even the monopolists) is their ability to “draw us into . . . adventures.” But beyond this, two major points must be made. First, Togliatti speaks as if Italy were like China, a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country with the goal of ending imperialist domination, destroying “feudal remnants,” completing the bourgeois revolution and establishing a new democratic state. Such remnants did exist (as they do in virtually all countries in today’s world), but Italy was and still is an imperialist country. Its bourgeois revolution was completed with its unification under the revolutionary-democratic leadership of men like Garibaldi in the 19th century. In Italy a new revolution can only be a socialist one since the target is the bourgeoisie, now a thoroughly reactionary class—and this has been true since long before WW2, and indeed even before WW1.

Second, it should be stressed that nowhere in Togliatti’s definition can one find mention of proletarian leadership, which is necessary even where a new-democratic revolution is the correct strategy. For Togliatti the proletariat is simply the new representative of the “nation,” whose task is to pick up the tattered flag of nationalism from the mud in which the fascists (representing only a few “plutocrats” and some pesty “feudal remnants”) have dragged it:

In the present historical period the most reactionary capitalist classes have betrayed the interests of the nation. Therefore, the working class tends to put itself at the head of all the popular forces in defense of the interest and freedom of the nation.<sup>65</sup>

Darn, complains Togliatti. In this imperialist stage the capitalists just aren’t the fighting patriots they used to be, so we’ll just have to do the job for them. And, of course, this means we’ll have to give up on some of what we should be doing, since we’ll be so busy doing what *they* should be doing.

This is really the logic of the argument. And as a direct product of this crude nationalism, “progressive democracy” adopted a thoroughly constitutional approach to making change. Because only the working class is “capable of defending the general interests of the country . . . In this situation the necessity of entering into the government was also imposed on us . . .”<sup>66</sup> Of course, entering the government means being responsible. And so Togliatti put forward that in a progressive democratic government a *major task* is, believe it or not, to “make the rich pay their taxes!”<sup>67</sup> And if the rich pay taxes, well, then the workers owe it to them to produce: “The demand for a national economic plan seems utopian



to me," said Togliatti. "We demand controls over production and exchange on the model of those existing in England and the United States. The first thing that must be done is to make appeals to workers for increased production."<sup>68</sup>

Togliatti's "progressive democracy" was thus really not so different from Thorez' more blatant economism. Both were revisionist and traitorous to the cause of the working class.

### COULD THEY HAVE SEIZED POWER?

In rationalizing their line the French and Italian parties have offered several rationalizations for why it would have been impossible to advance further than they did and especially impossible to make proletarian revolution. A favorite excuse is that the petty bourgeoisie was interested mainly in the patriotic struggle and to press harder for the independent interests of the working class, for socialism, would have alienated them. This ignores, however, that it was the communists themselves who limited the struggle to the bounds of a fight for national liberation. Insofar as people (including also many workers) were unprepared to go further, this was not mainly a product of objective conditions. And historical experience has shown that it is not a strong stand against the bourgeoisie but vacillation and conciliation toward it which prevent the working class from winning over allies. As the *Programme of the RCP* states: "The more resolutely the proletariat fights for its revolutionary interests as a class, the broader the sections of the petty bourgeoisie it will be able to win over."<sup>69</sup>

And in fact the evidence is that the petty bourgeoisie was *not* alienated by the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. In both France and Italy those parties with a petty bourgeois social base often were to the left of the communists, reflecting the radicalization of their supporters.

In Italy the petty bourgeois Action Party raised the slogan "Finish the CLN Revolution!"<sup>70</sup> In France the non-communist resistance newspaper, *Combat*, edited by the existentialist Albert Camus, which had a broad readership among the petty bourgeoisie, raised on its masthead the slogan "De la Resistance a la Revolution!" (From Resistance to Revolution). Its editors argued that "It is not enough to reconquer the semblance of freedom with which the France of 1939 had to be content. Unlike the old France, the new France must not be under the thumb of the financial powers..."

On the role of the communists they declared:

"Anti-Communism is the beginning of dictatorship!  
While disagreeing with the Communists on many

points we firmly reject political anti-Communism, with all its unavowed aims... And while we agree with Communists on their collectivism, their social programme, their ideal of economic justice, and their disgust with a moneyed society, we thoroughly disagree with their 'political realism.'<sup>71</sup>

The kind of "political realism" practiced by Thorez was, of course, certainly worth disagreeing with. But it should have been the communists themselves who led in its criticism.

The main argument raised in defense of the line of these parties, however, is that the presence of U.S. troops rendered any revolution impossible. During the expulsion of Marty and Tillon in 1952 the PCF justified its actions in these words:

"... In August 1944 the war was not yet over. A reversal of alliance was possible, to produce a front of capitalist powers against the Soviet Union. If they had been given an excuse, the Americans who had come to France as fighters at the last minute, for fear that the Soviet army would advance too far west, would not have hesitated to make an alliance with Hitler in Europe and Japan in Asia in order to range all the forces of international capitalism against the country of socialism.

"In France itself, in spite of the considerable growth of its influence, the party would soon have been isolated if it had taken any other course than that of continuing the war against Hitler, and the only result would have been a bloody failure. De Gaulle would have been given an excuse to use the British and American armies to crush the working class, and come to terms with Petain [Vichy government] and continue the sinister work of the Gestapo.

"The wise and farsighted policy of the party did not allow this. Communists are revolutionaries, not adventurers..."<sup>72</sup>

But this really avoids the question. As noted previously, a reversal of alliances was possible, but unlikely. There was not only the possibility of the party's isolation, but of the isolation of the Americans, De Gaulle and of the bourgeoisie in Italy as well. As for the U.S. and British soldiers themselves, what was to guarantee their willingness to wage war against former allies and against their fellow workers? Certainly the strong "bring 'em home" movement in the U.S. immediately after the war expressed the real



desire of the American people not to become involved in being the policemen of liberated Europe.

Moreover, the question was not one of taking power specifically in August 1944 in France or April 1945 in Italy. It is impossible to say whether the balance of forces would have been favorable for the launching of an actual insurrection at these or any other specific moments had the parties followed a revolutionary line which prepared the masses for such a time. *But the real problem posed by the situation was whether or not to prepare at all for such a moment! And it is for failing to do this that the PCI and the PCF must be sharply criticized.*

It is useful here to recall, in contrast to the return of Thorez and Togliatti to their homelands, Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917 when he advanced the then shocking thesis that the workers must prepare to seize power. At that moment the conditions were not yet ripe for an actual insurrection and there was no way that Lenin could predict when such conditions would mature. But overall the situation was clearly a revolutionary one and the Party was called on to make revolution. Had the Bolsheviks failed to act on Lenin's proposal, it can be guaranteed that the specific situation which permitted the actual seizure of power in October 1917 would never have developed. And today we might be debating with the revisionists about whether it was possible to seize power in Russia in 1917 or whether the presence of the German army ruled this out.

Thorez, Togliatti and company did have some experience to point to in support of their line. In Belgium at the end of 1944 a very large communist-led resistance movement initially refused to turn in its weapons to the Allies but was forced to back down after an armed confrontation with British troops in the heart of Brussels. This experience does not, however, support the revisionist arguments. For in the midst of this struggle the Belgian party leaders lost control of the rank and file after agreeing to disarm. The Brussels action was organized after this and *from below*. In fact, after the troops fired on the crowd, the workers called a general strike against the British and their Belgian allies. But at this point the Communist Party leaders were able to regain control and the strike failed. The party then agreed to do everything for the war effort under Anglo-U.S. leadership.<sup>73</sup> What if the Belgian leaders had played a different role?

### GREECE: THE FAILURE OF CONCILIATION

The main example often pointed to as illustrating the supposed futility of revolution in the face of overwhelming Anglo-U.S. force is Greece, where the British bloodily suppressed the communist-

led resistance. Yet here, too, the failure of the masses to consolidate power can largely be attributed to revisionist errors made by the Greek Communist Party (KKE).

Between 1941 and 1944 the KKE, which had faced vicious repression under the prewar fascist government, organized and led a massive resistance movement, the EAM, which commanded a considerable partisan army known as ELAS. During the war Britain supported the exile government of George Papandreou in Cairo. This group had so little support among the Greek people that its own army rebelled against it, only to be put down by British guns. Despite this, EAM correctly sought some unity with Papandreou, but this was done on an unprincipled and capitulationist basis.

On September 14, 1944 Hitler ordered Greece evacuated not only because of the overall military situation but explicitly to "kindle and fan strife between Communist and nationalist forces."<sup>74</sup> EAM and the British met on September 26 to sign the Caserta Agreement, aimed at foiling this scheme. At Caserta, however, EAM incorrectly agreed to put its forces under command of Britain's General Scobie. This was an unnecessary concession since they had no need for British troops in the first place, the Germans having left without a fight, abandoning massive arms dumps which fell into the hands of ELAS, now 50,000 strong. In Athens people "sang the songs of ELAS and EAM, sang the Internationale,"<sup>75</sup> yet the KKE leadership forbade the partisans from taking the capital. Instead, they permitted British troops to land here and welcomed them as "liberators" from an enemy who had already fled. Papandreou was installed as head of a "national unity government."

ELAS partisans still controlled the countryside, however, and in Athens they had 20,000 armed soldiers. The British moved quickly against this. They steadily increased the size of their own garrison and stepped up pressure for disarmament of ELAS. Papandreou restored to office thousands of collaborators and sought to put a strait jacket on the mass movement. On December 2 he ordered the dissolution of ELAS. EAM received permission for a legal protest the next day but government troops, supported by the British, machine gunned down the demonstrators, killing 24 and wounding over 100. Some demonstrators had carried signs criticizing the repression of the new regime, reading simply, "The Germans are back."<sup>76</sup>

Armed struggle between the Greek people and British imperialism had begun. Churchill cabled Scobie:

"... do not hesitate to fire at any armed male in Athens who assails the British authority or the

Greek authority with which we are working. It would be well, of course, if your command were reinforced by the authority of some Greek government. . . . *Do not, however, hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress.*" (emphasis in original)<sup>77</sup>

"The clear objective," he declared, "is the defeat of EAM."<sup>78</sup>

In the face of this forthright challenge, EAM and its communist leadership did not take a strong stand but continued to conciliate. Throughout November the EAM newspaper had urged support for Papandreou. Indeed, ELAS had submitted its own disarmament plans to the British. Nonetheless, when the fighting began, ELAS quickly gained the upper hand, isolating the British in small sections of Athens and its port of Piraeus. According to one British general it was already "a first class disaster."<sup>79</sup> Yet on December 8 and again on the 11th ELAS offered to withdraw from these two cities in exchange for a cease-fire!

On December 24, Churchill himself arrived in Athens and EAM leaders, including KKE head George Siantos, entered into negotiations with him. But Churchill's stand was "no peace without victory," that is, he demanded the complete capitulation of the popular forces. Just when the Allies were facing the German counter-offensive at Ardennes which threatened Belgium, British reinforcements poured into Greece. Even Papandreou resigned in protest, but Churchill organized a new government with the reactionary Archbishop Damaskinos at its head. Having failed to employ its initial advantage to push the British into the sea, still seeking to negotiate and offer concessions at every key point, ELAS withdrew from the Athens-Piraeus area during the night of January 4-5.

At this point ELAS forces still controlled four-fifths of the country. Nonetheless, on January 11 ELAS agreed to a ceasefire, surrendering most of its territory and gaining little. On February 12, having never really been defeated, EAM-ELAS signed the Varkiza Agreement, according to the terms of which ELAS formally disbanded and surrendered most of its weaponry in exchange for what, of course, turned out to be hollow promises for the removal of collaborators from the government, legalizing of EAM and elections within a year. After Varkiza the EAM leaders continued to follow the same rightist course (although also making a few "left" errors, like refusing to participate in the elections) and this led to the Greek people being poorly prepared for the civil war which was thrust upon them in 1946.

Before Varkiza it would definitely have been possible, had EAM not followed a capitulationist policy, to defeat Britain while continuing to give overall support to the final defeat of the Axis. Even after the Varkiza treachery the Greek people put up a hell of a fight for three years during the civil war of 1946-49. While the fighting raged in Athens in 1944, the war against Germany was far from over and this limited the number of British troops which could be brought in. Outside Athens ELAS was in control and experienced in a protracted popular war. But most important the Greek partisans enjoyed the support of the people of the world. Even Western newspapers raked the British over the coals, believing that its ambitions in Greece were harmful to the general interests of the Western imperialists. In London the Churchill government was nearly defeated on the issue in the House of Commons. Had ELAS proved incapable of immediate victory, nonetheless protracted war (a strategy developed under China's conditions by Mao Tsetung) would no doubt have led to Britain's eventual defeat.<sup>80</sup>

And in fact the Greek communists were themselves divided over these questions. The main party leaders, Siantos and, later, after his return from prison, Nikos Zachariadis, championed the line of conciliation to Britain and of skepticism toward people's war in the countryside. As early as August 1943 (over a year before Stalin's pencilled "agreement" with Churchill giving Britain a 90% share of Greece) Siantos declared that "Greece falls into that region of Europe where the British assume total responsibility."<sup>81</sup> But many among the partisan *kapetanios*, including the legendary Aris Velouchiotis in the KKE leadership, opposed this revisionism.<sup>82</sup> Even before their arrival, Velouchiotis said of the British that "if they can, they will impose a fascist regime under another name."<sup>83</sup> After Varkiza, Velouchiotis refused to carry out the agreement and withdrew to the mountains to continue the struggle. He was killed there under mysterious circumstances.

Many of these more revolutionary forces within EAM, however, were weakened by the "support" they received from Tito in Yugoslavia, whose major interest in Greece was the Macedonian separatist movement which Yugoslavia backed as part of their notorious scheme for a Balkan federation under Tito's control.<sup>84</sup> Titoite agitation and support for Macedonian separatism divided EAM and weakened the revolutionary forces within it. Tito's alleged support of the Greek revolution was exposed for its narrow nationalist aims when Tito sealed the fate of the Greek people by closing the border to the guerrilla fighters at the close of the civil war in 1949. At the same time he encouraged those of his "supporters" among the Greek partisans to pour into neighboring Albania and wage a fight against the revolutionary government of

the workers and peasants there which Tito long had tried to swallow up. As a result the Albanians too were forced to close their border.\*

In fact, the whole experience of tiny Albania stand in sharp contrast to both the capitulationism of the KKE and the reactionary nationalism of the Titoites.<sup>85</sup> "While recognizing Britain and the U.S. as allies in the common struggle against fascism and appreciating the contribution of these two powers to the achievement of victory, the Communist Party of Albania and the National Liberation Front did not forget the aims of these powers to ensure their hegemony in the world when the war was over."<sup>86</sup> Thus, when the British attempted to land in Albania they were turned away at the beach. And the Albanian Party took the firm stand that "We should do away with the idea that with the departure of the Germans we have done the whole job..."<sup>87</sup> They instead used the crisis the war represented to rid Albania of the Germans and all the old exploiters, establishing a socialist society under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STALIN

Greece raises the question of Stalin's responsibility for the revisionist errors made by the communist parties, in particular in the occupied countries. For the Soviet Union made no protest over the British intervention in Athens, and the head of the Soviet military mission resided in the British embassy in the city throughout the bloody operation. Soviet advisors counseled EAM to sign the Caserta Agreement and later to lay down their arms. Moreover, it was no accident that both Thorez and Togliatti returned home from Moscow to implement their revisionist theses.

As explained before, it was by and large correct for the Soviet Union to make concessions on the state-to-state level in order to maintain the alliance with Britain, France and the U.S. This explains much about Stalin's painful silence concerning Greece. To prevent Anglo-U.S. intervention in Eastern Europe he agreed to ignore what went on elsewhere. But it was another thing entirely

\*Tito's Yugoslav partisans are often held up as a positive example of how communists could and should have correctly combined the national and class struggles during the war. Indeed, there is some positive experience to be summed up from the Yugoslav struggle. However, it is now clear that Tito's line was really a variant of militant petty-bourgeois peasant nationalism, since the socialist system was never really established in that country. Further, once in power Tito's line developed into a more and more full-blown revisionist line which was condemned by genuine communists everywhere. Quite revealing is that during the war Churchill held a high opinion of Tito and the two got on very well. Tito hoped to use Britain against the Soviet Union to achieve revisionist "independence," while Yugoslavia tried to swallow up other Balkan states.

to advocate this same policy for parties out of power. And clearly this too was an international line, pushed to a major extent by Moscow under Stalin's leadership.

In this Stalin erred on several counts. He did not clearly recognize the difference between the tasks of a party in power and parties out of power, and on this basis he tended to treat other parties as if they were extensions of the Soviet foreign ministry. Preoccupied with diplomacy, he tended to substitute relations between states for those among classes, exaggerating the strength of the united front between the USSR and the West and downplaying the importance of the united front of classes within the capitalist countries and of the centrality of proletarian leadership within this. Most important he tended to overestimate the strength of the imperialists and to underestimate that of the masses. These errors must be criticized and summed up, so as to learn from and avoid repeating them.

Yet it is equally important not to place such criticism of Stalin on a par with the critique of Thorez, Togliatti and company. In the final analysis Stalin stood for revolution, and these traitors did not. It was these revisionists who seized on the general errors of the international movement and blew them up into entire opportunist "theories," thus sabotaging the revolution. Stalin, on the other hand, organized criticism of the right errors made by the French and Italian parties at the first meeting of the Cominform in 1947 (although this criticism, presented, incidentally and ironically, by the Yugoslavs, was not very thorough).

The errors made by these and other parties were not without their own internal roots. It should be recalled, for instance, that KKE leader Siantos was willing to deliver Greece into the British sphere well before Stalin even turned his attention to that country. To place blame for every error on an "all-powerful" Stalin (while denying him credit for the many victories won under the leadership of his line) is the method of the Trotskyites, and a backwards and useless method it is, at least for revolutionaries. Hurling all criticism at Stalin evades the more difficult and essential task of really rooting out the sources of this kind of revisionism wherever it rears its ugly head.

Indeed, it must be remembered that a sharp two-line struggle between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism was rapidly developing throughout the international communist movement at this very time, including and especially in the Soviet party. And one of the key issues of this struggle was how to view the nature of imperialism and its relation to war. In the struggle over the Soviet post-war "peace offensive" it was Stalin and Molotov who stood for Leninism, and Khrushchev who advocated conciliation and social democracy of the Togliatti type.<sup>88</sup> And it is not surprising

that Thorez and Togliatti eagerly jumped on Khrushchev's anti-Stalin bandwagon in 1956.

Moreover, there was nothing which said that foreign parties had to accept incorrect advice from the Soviet Union. The experience of the Communist Party of China, led by Mao Tsetung, is powerful testimony to this. Indeed, Stalin later admitted publically that he had incorrectly advised Mao to concede to Chiang Kai-shek and his U.S. backers at the end of WW2. And he said he was glad to have been proven wrong.<sup>89</sup>

### MAO TSETUNG: "ALL REACTIONARIES ARE PAPER TIGERS"

As a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country China's situation was very different from that of the imperialist countries of Europe. Where Togliatti's "progressive democracy" was a revisionist thesis, Mao's development of new democracy as the correct revolutionary strategy for the colonial world enriched and developed Marxism-Leninism. (For a summation of Mao's contributions to Marxist-Leninist theory on revolution in colonial countries see "Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions," Part 1, *Revolution*, April-May, 1978.) And there are also important lessons to be learned for communists in all countries from how Mao correctly handled the question of independence and initiative in the united front. (For more on the Chinese Party's correct line before and during the war see the two previous articles in this series.)

When the Soviet Union was invaded, Mao immediately posed three tasks:

"1. Persevere in the National United Front Against Japan, persevere in Kuomintang-Communist cooperation, drive the Japanese imperialists out of China, and by these means assist the Soviet Union.

"2. Resolutely combat all the anti-Soviet and anti-Communist activities of the reactionaries among the big bourgeoisie.

"In foreign relations, unite against the common foe with everybody in Britain, the United States and other countries who is opposed to the fascist rulers of Germany, Italy and Japan."<sup>90</sup>

It is important to note the phrasing here of the third task. Nowhere does Mao limit unity with the allied powers to unity among governments. Indeed, this word does not even appear. Mao defines the international united front correctly as a united front of

people and classes defined by opposition to the main enemy. And, while giving full support to the Soviet Union, Mao also followed the principle outlined in his statement quoted at the beginning of this article: compromise by a socialist country "does not require the people in the countries of the capitalist world to follow suit and make compromises at home. The people in those countries will continue to wage different struggles in accordance with their different conditions."<sup>91</sup>

At Yalta the Soviet Union expressed a willingness to conclude a friendship treaty with Chiang Kai-shek and acknowledged his sovereignty over Manchuria, which Japan had occupied since 1931.<sup>92</sup> This treaty was signed on August 14, 1945. Thus, when the Soviet troops entered the area, they were obligated to turn over captured arms, prisoners and territory to Chiang and not to Mao. Even so, after the surrender of Japan, Soviet occupation forces initially assisted the communist-led Eighth Route Army. After a time, however, this policy was reversed as a concession to the U.S. Throughout most of the war and until the very eve of the final liberation of China, the Soviet Union recognized the Kuomintang (KMT) government and gave it economic and some political and military support. It was, even during 1946-1949, in this situation that Stalin advised Mao to yield to Chiang's leadership.

The policy of the Chinese Communist Party, however, was neither to blindly follow the Soviet Union's lead nor to lose sight of the necessities facing the Soviet leaders and attack them. Instead, Mao continued to support the Soviet Union but followed a policy of self-reliance in the struggle against Chiang and his U.S. backers. "On what basis should our policy rest?" he asked. "It should rest on our own strength, and that means regeneration through one's own efforts."<sup>93</sup>

Mao also attempted to unite with Chiang and avoid civil war but he did this not to conciliate with but to isolate and expose, the KMT. At the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of China, on the eve of the victory against Japan in 1945, Mao proposed the formation of a coalition government. But he stressed that such a government must be founded upon the abolition of KMT dictatorship and must have a new-democratic program.<sup>94</sup>

Mao warned that Chiang's policies were aimed at starting a civil war to destroy the Communist Party. In this, he warned, Chiang was looking to the U.S. to send someone to "do the same job in China as the British General Scobie has been doing in Greece."<sup>95</sup> The U.S. imperialists also claimed to favor a coalition government but in private they stressed that Chiang alone "offers the best hope" and that "we do want to maintain this particular government."<sup>96</sup> In response Mao advised vigilance: "We must be clear-headed, that is, we must not believe the 'nice words' of the im-

perialists nor be intimidated by their bluster."<sup>97</sup>

While preparing for war Mao was willing to negotiate for peace since this was the widespread desire of the Chinese people and it was necessary to expose Chiang as the saboteur of peace and a democratic coalition government. But Mao's approach to negotiations differed from that of the revisionists in Western Europe and Greece who negotiated away the people's strength: "Sometimes, not going to negotiations is tit-for-tat; and sometimes, going to negotiations is also tit-for-tat,"<sup>98</sup> he said.

In negotiating with Chiang, concessions were necessary, but such concessions, Mao argued, must strengthen the revolution and not conciliate to reaction:

"We on our side are prepared to make such concessions as are necessary and as do not damage the fundamental interests of the people. Without such concessions, we cannot explode the Kuomintang's civil war plot, cannot gain the political initiative, cannot win the sympathy of world public opinion and the middle-of-the-roads within the country and cannot obtain in exchange legal status for our Party and a state of peace. But there are limits to such concessions; the principle is that they must not damage the fundamental interests of the people."<sup>99</sup>

How different a spirit this is from the conciliation and toadying up to imperialism expressed in the disarming of the French resistance, the "Salerno switch" and the Caserta and Varkiza agreements!

Mao's line was also distinguished by his firm reliance on Marxism-Leninism, on the method of class analysis and the basic principles of materialist dialectics. Since China was a semi-colonial country the struggle there was a struggle for national liberation. But Mao did not simply speak for the "nation," judging his opponents simply according to the extent of their patriotism. Mao analyzed the *class forcés* at work. He saw that *the united front was a front of classes, which must be led by the proletariat*. Even in making the democratic revolution, Mao stressed, "We Communists do not conceal our political views. Definitely and beyond all doubt, our future or maximum programme is to carry China forward to socialism and communism."<sup>100</sup>

In 1963 in its polemic with the Soviet revisionists, the Communist Party of China reaffirmed Mao's correct stand which, when applied to the concrete conditions in China, led to the victory of the revolution:

"On the basis of the worker-peasant alliance the proletariat and its party must unite all strata that can be united and organize a broad united front against imperialism and its lackeys. In order to consolidate and expand this united front it is necessary that the proletarian party should maintain its ideological, political and organizational independence and insist on the leadership of the revolution. . . . On the national question the world outlook of the proletarian party is internationalism, and not nationalism. In the revolutionary struggle it supports progressive nationalism and opposes reactionary nationalism. It must always draw a clear line of demarcation between itself and bourgeois nationalism, to which it must never fall captive."<sup>101</sup>

Mao's line did not develop without sharp struggle in the party. Overawed by the power of imperialism and underestimating the revolutionary strength of the masses of people, Liu Shao-ch'i, Lin Piao and other revisionists preached a line of defeatism. Like revisionists everywhere they hoped, prayed and convinced themselves that the imperialists would change of their own free will. But Mao responded that "Everything reactionary is the same; if you don't hit it, it won't fall. It is like sweeping the floor; where the broom does not reach, the dust never vanishes of itself."<sup>102</sup> These revisionists cowered in fear before the U.S. monopoly of the atom bomb. Mao called their attention to the British Lord Mountbatten who said that the atom bomb could not decide the war. "These comrades," Mao declared, "are more backward than Mountbatten. What influence has made these comrades look upon the atom bomb as something miraculous? Bourgeois influence."<sup>103</sup>

In response to this revisionist capitulationism Mao took the correct proletarian stand of a revolutionary optimist: "All reactionaries are paper tigers," he said, and:

"In appearance the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. . . . Take the case of China. We have only millet plus rifles to rely on, but history will finally prove that our millet plus rifles is more powerful than Chiang Kai-shek's aeroplanes plus tanks. Although the Chinese people still face many difficulties and will long suffer hardships from the joint attacks of U.S. imperialism and the Chinese reactionaries, the day will come when these reactionaries are defeated and we are victorious. The reason is simply this: the reactionaries

represent reaction, we represent progress."<sup>104</sup>

### CONCLUSION

These words of Mao's ring as true today as then. While some may cower before and stand in awe of the temporary power of the imperialists and their lackeys and throw up their hands in despair when confronted by some temporary and partial gains they have made after WW2, the future remains bright. The new world war which is upon the horizon will bring a crisis of immense proportions to imperialism world-wide. Such a war will surely mean great suffering for millions—and the proletariat will certainly seek to avenge every drop of blood shed by the workers and the masses everywhere—but, if the revolutionary forces keep to the high road of revolutionary struggle, and with the likely development of revolutionary situations in many countries, including the real prospect of revolution here in the U.S., the outcome of the next war will surely bring a new dawn for the proletariat and all mankind. For in the modern world only the proletariat and socialism represent progress; the imperialist bourgeoisie and its lackeys can only spell reaction. This is the most important lesson to be learned from the outcome of WW2 and the events that followed it. ■

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Mao Tsetung, "Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, London, 1948, p. 1231.

<sup>3</sup>Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-45*, New York, 1968, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>Roosevelt's son recalls the president making such a statement to Churchill at the Cairo conference. Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It*, New York, 1946, p. 156.

<sup>5</sup>Henry L. Stimson & McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in War and Peace*, New York, 1948, p. 527.

<sup>6</sup>Anthony Eden, *The Reckoning: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden*, Boston, 1965, p. 368.

<sup>7</sup>U.S. Dept. of State, *The Conferences of Malta and Yalta*, Washington, 1959, p. 539ff.

<sup>8</sup>J.V. Stalin, *The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, New York, 1945, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in G. Deborin, *Secrets of the Second World War*, English translation, Moscow, 1971, p. 186.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 327-43.

<sup>12</sup>Winston S. Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, New York, 1962, pp. 44-45.

<sup>13</sup>*Daily Herald*, Nov. 24, 1954 as quoted in Deborin, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>14</sup>Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *Roosevelt and the Russians*, Garden City, New York, 1949, p. 295.

<sup>15</sup>Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*, New York, 1970, p. 268.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted *ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>17</sup>Eden, *op. cit.*, p. 595.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed; the Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*, New York, 1973, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Activists of the Moscow Organization of the R.C.P.(B.), December 6, 1920," *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 438.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Clemens, *op. cit.*, p. 269. According to this author, "Within a few months after the Conference, the United States attempted to undo those agreements at Yalta which reflected Soviet interests. . . The United States camouflaged its demands by accusing the Soviet Union of breaking the Yalta agreements, while, in fact, attempting to force the Soviet Union to make new agreements superseding Yalta. . . The Soviets, for their part, generally complied with the Yalta decisions sponsored by and beneficial to the West." (pp. 268-69)

<sup>22</sup>Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup>Testimony of Groves, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Transcript of Hearing Before Personnel Security Board, Washington, D.C., April 12, 1954 to May 6, 1954, p. 173.

<sup>24</sup>These conclusions have now been so thoroughly documented that it is hardly necessary to go more deeply here. See, for example, William A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New York, 1962, pp. 248, 253-56, and Gar Alperovitz, "The Use of the Atomic Bomb" in his *Cold War Essays*, New York, 1970. Sherwin, *op. cit.*, nominally concludes differently, but his whole book runs counter to this and makes clear that "The diplomacy of atomic energy came to rest during the war on a simple and dangerous assumption: that the Soviet government would surrender important geographical, political and ideological objectives in exchange for the neutralization of the new weapon." (p. 237)

<sup>25</sup>Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

<sup>26</sup>Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, New York, 1962, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup>Milovan Djilas, *Conversations With Stalin*, New York, 1962, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Kolko, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Under a False Flag," *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 140-41, 142.

<sup>31</sup>V.I. Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet," *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 310.

<sup>32</sup>Ndreci Plasari, "The Unity of the People Around the CPA in the National Liberation Front," *The National Conference of Studies on the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War of the Albanian People*, Tirana, 1975, pp. 63-64.

<sup>32a</sup>J.V. Stalin, "On the Death of Lenin," *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup>*Histoire du Parti Communiste Francais* (History of the French Communist Party), editions "Unir," Paris, 1960, II, p.60. This is a three-volume history of the PCF written by a rightist opposition group. See also Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement; from Comintern to Cominform*, New York, 1975, II, p. 321.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p. 136.

<sup>35</sup>*Le Parti Communiste Francais dans la Resistance* (The French Communist Party in the Resistance), Paris, 1967, p. 236.

<sup>36</sup>Quoted in Claudin, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 323-24.

<sup>37</sup>*Le PCF dans la Resistance*, *op. cit.*, p. 241-42.

<sup>38</sup>Prida Knight, *The French Resistance, 1940-1944*, London, 1975, pp. 184-203.

<sup>39</sup>Alexander Werth, *France, 1940-1956*, Boston, 1966, p. 216.

<sup>40</sup>Quoted in Kolko, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup>*Histoire du PCF (Unir)*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 246.

<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Ronald Tiersky, *French Communism, 1920-1972*, New York, 1974, p. 121.

<sup>44</sup>Maurice Thorez, *Oeuvres (Works)*, 21, pp. 57, 118.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in Kolko, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

<sup>46</sup>Maurice Thorez, *Oeuvres Choisies* (Selected Works), Paris, 1966, II, pp. 351-52.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>Quoted in Claudin, *op. cit.*, II, p. 338.

<sup>49</sup>Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs: Unity*, London, 1955, p. 293.

<sup>50</sup>Quoted in Claudin, *op. cit.*, II, p. 342.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p. 343.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p. 345.

<sup>53</sup>Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Wanberg, eds., *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, Washington, 1964, p. 435.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Claudin, *op. cit.*, II, p. 350.

<sup>57</sup>Quoted in Aldo Brandirali and Gianmario Bottino, *La linea politica dei comunisti nella resistenza e nel dopo guerra, 1943-1953* (The Political Line of Communists in the Resistance and After the War, 1943-1953), Milan, 1974, p. 65. I am indebted to a member of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade for providing a translation of this interesting collection of documents and commentary.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>59</sup>Quoted in Claudin, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>64</sup>Palmiro Togliatti, "For Italy's Freedom! For the Formation of a Truly Democratic Government" (July 9, 1944) in Brandirali and Bottino, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>65</sup>P. Togliatti, "Report to the Cadres of the Naples Communist Party Headquarters" (April 11, 1944), *ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>66</sup>P. Togliatti, "Report to the Cadres of the PCI Florentine Federation" (October 3, 1944) *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>67</sup>P. Togliatti, "Speech at the Women's Conference of the PCI" (June 5, 1945), *ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>68</sup>Quoted *ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>69</sup>*Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, Chicago, 1975, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup>Claudin, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

<sup>71</sup>Werth, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>72</sup>*Cahiers du Communisme* (theoretical journal of the PCF), October, 1952. Every time there is a major upheaval in France this question arises anew. In 1968 the PCF was once more forced to defend its 1944-45 policies against the questioning of its rank and file (*L'Humanite*, January 24, 1969).

<sup>73</sup>Kolko, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted *ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>75</sup>Dominique Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, New York, 1972, p. 171.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190; Kolko, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>77</sup>Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>79</sup>Kolko, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>80</sup>This position is effectively argued in Kostas Mavrakis, *Du Trotskysme*, Paris, 1973, pp. 210-36. This excellent book has been translated in Britain as *On Trotskyism* but is difficult to find and very expensive in the U.S. Its chapter on "The Defeat of the Greek Communists" is the best short summation of the Greek experience.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>82</sup>See Eudes, *op. cit.*, for a discussion of these men, especially of Velouchiotis. The book is marred, however, by its acceptance of much of the Titoist line. The author blames Stalin and not the Greek revisionists for the defeat of the revolution.

<sup>83</sup>Mavrakis, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>84</sup>Kolko, *op. cit.*, pp. 432-36.

<sup>85</sup>On Albania in WW2 see "On the Character of World War 2," *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 101-102.

<sup>86</sup>Shyqri Ballvora and Sotin Manushi, "The National Liberation Movement of the Albanian People and the Anti-Fascist World War," *The National Conference . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>87</sup>Enver Hoxha, "Report to the 1st Plenum of the CC, May 1944," quoted in Nexhmije Hoxha, "The Anti-Fascist National Liberation War—A great People's Revolution Led by the Communist Party of Albania," *The National Conference . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>88</sup>R.A. Remington, *The Warsaw Pact*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup>Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge*, Boston, 1972, p. 505.

<sup>90</sup>Mao Tsetung, "On the International United Front Against Fascism," *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 29.

<sup>91</sup>Mao, "Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 87.

<sup>92</sup>Clemens, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>93</sup>Mao, "The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 20.

<sup>94</sup>Mao's proposals and his analysis of the situation were detailed in "On Coalition Government," the main political report to the 7th Congress, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 205-70.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>96</sup>Quoted in Kolko, *op. cit.*, pp. 527, 528. U.S. support for Chiang is, of course, well documented. See, for example, John S. Service, *The Amerasia Papers*, Berkeley, 1971.

<sup>97</sup>Mao, "The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 20.

<sup>98</sup>Mao, "On the Chungking Negotiations," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 56.

<sup>99</sup>Mao, "On Peace Negotiations with the Kuomintang," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 49.

<sup>100</sup>Mao, "On Coalition Government," *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 232.

<sup>101</sup>Communist Party of China, "A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement," Peking, 1963, pp. 16-17.

<sup>102</sup>Mao, "The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 19.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>104</sup>Mao, "Talk with the American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong," *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 100-101.



# Revolutionary Work in A Non-Revolutionary Situation

## Report of the Second Plenary Session of the First Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (1976)

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# On the Mensheviks' Views Of Crisis

## "Capitalism Works After All"

*R. Lotta*

One of the hallmarks of the Jarvis-Bergman clique was their utter contempt for theory—at least Marxist-Leninist theory—and for the waging of the theoretical struggle by the proletariat and its Party. So narrow and petty was their outlook, so ensnared were they by the temptations of the moment, that the best they could do would be to muck around—here in Marx, there in some Party documents or, more often, documents from the old Communist Party (CP) or the Comintern, taken wholesale at face value, despite what has been learned by the international communist movement—to offer up some snippets to justify their putrid practice. Usually, they would make a show of agreeing with the Party's line, even at times pretending to deepen it, all for the purpose of undermining it. It was almost uncanny how Jarvis in particular would read just the opposite of what was intended into Party documents and gut the life out of Marxist texts, reducing them all to a ceremonial paraphrase with which anything could be justified. For a pack of scoundrels who hardly did any study, who hardly ever made any useful theoretical contributions, their warped ability to deftly manipulate a narrow range of ideas and concepts does invite a certain comparison with not the worst of charlatans.

The hankering of the despicable duo of Jarvis and Bergman for the "good old CP" was certainly reflected in their insistence on making a virtue of many of its weaknesses. The CP's failure to arm its membership with Marxist-Leninist theory and the overall failure of the CP, even at the highest levels and even in its best period, to be deeply rooted in the science of revolution resulted in it being buffeted about as conditions changed and new tasks confronted it.

In the early 1930s when it generally based itself on the goal of revolution, the CP was not able to correctly analyze objective conditions; this was revealed, for instance, in its erroneous assessment that a revolutionary situation had arrived. Later, in the late '30s, the '40s, and early '50s, failing to grasp the underlying contradic-

tions in society and their laws of development, the CP became awed by the temporary strength of U.S. imperialism and finally fell into complete reformism and revisionism. The Bergman-Jarvis bunch were never reconciled to making a break with the pragmatism of the old CP, and it was only a matter of time before they would lapse into the revisionism that they claimed to detest.

As recounted in the May 1978 issue of *Revolution*, these Mensheviks did not regard the formation of the Revolutionary Communist Party as any sort of advance. The Party-building process had been too principled for their tastes, geared as it was to ideological and political line. This precluded the sort of unholy alliances and opportunist compromises that might have resulted in some other forces coming in and which would have allowed Jarvis and Bergman to put another feather in their caps and provided more soil for their factional maneuverings. But the Party-building process constituted an advance because it concentrated the experience of applying Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of the U.S., and on this basis the general staff of the working class was formed, armed with a battle plan to lead the class forward. This concentration of the correct line was embodied in the *Party Programme and Constitution* and largely in the Main Political Report adopted at its Founding Congress. Of particular importance was the analysis made in this Report of the crisis, the international situation, war and revolution.

From the very beginning, Jarvis sought to twist the meaning of this Report to suit his own rightism. He would place an "independent" interpretation on it and subsequent documents which "deepened" its analysis. While he would waffle as the struggle developed, discernible trends emerged within the Party that enjoyed his unqualified support.

### INITIAL JARVIS VIEWS OF CRISIS

What was the analysis of crisis put forward in this Main Political Report? The heart of it was that U.S. imperialism has entered into a downward spiral. The current crisis, it stressed, was not simply a "downturn," but a world-wide crisis of the imperialist system—the first such crisis since the '30s and the war and redivision that followed it. This crisis would continue to deepen and bring with it both stepped-up attacks on the working class and masses of people and intensified resistance. The Jarvis-led forces seized upon this analysis and hoped to bolster up their economism by distorting it.

Essentially the view the Jarvis forces advanced at the time was that the crisis would develop in a straight line down. It would unfold in a linear sort of way—unemployment mounting, wages being

slashed, bankruptcies spreading, etc.—and eventually (not so far off, either) the bottom would fall out, the whole edifice of the capitalist economy would collapse. It must be said that a certain tendency to view the crisis in this way was fairly widespread in the Party and existed on all levels, even among those who have continued to adhere to the Party's revolutionary line. But among these latter, who never carried this as far as the Jarvis-led faction nor made it part of a whole reformist position, there has been a consistent attempt to sum up such errors and to carry out more consistently revolutionary work, based on a deepening grasp of the objective laws and a Marxist analysis of the situation and its development. The opposite has been the case with Jarvis and his cabal. There has been a view that was not based on an understanding of a new spiral which had its beginnings in the late '60s with the military reversals of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, the intensifying competition within the U.S. led bloc—initially expressed in gold difficulties—and the full flowering of Soviet social-imperialism. Rather, this view was based on the precipitous decline of the economy in 1974-75, but it was left at the perceptual level. It did not see this overproduction crisis in its interconnection with the international situation and the longer-term trends affecting U.S. imperialism.

Now the decline of '74-'75 was indeed a watershed; this is reflected in its severity, as the drop in industrial production in January 1975 was the steepest one month decline since 1937. But it was not this alone that set this decline apart from the recession—and the very deep one, at that—of 1957-58. It was the international situation in which it was taking place and which, as mentioned, interacted with it.

But its seriousness did not lie in the fact that the U.S. imperialists, at that time or even now, did not have the reserves to avoid a total economic collapse, because they still have those reserves, though such a collapse and severe economic depression may well result from the further development of the present crisis—and will result unless world war, and more than that, a favorable outcome in that war for U.S. imperialism, precedes and prevents this. The seriousness of the present crisis lies exactly in the fact that these reserves—this maneuvering room of the U.S. imperialists—are diminishing and the only way for the U.S. imperialists to regain their previous strength, given this crisis and the international situation, is to redivide the world through war. The Jarvis forces never paid much attention to this question of war, the easier to fall in line with our own bourgeoisie when this war "unexpectedly" broke out.

At the Founding Congress the Jarvis-commanded forces, operating with this view of impending collapse, concocted a "left"

to Jarvis' "left" economism—though not in revolutionary opposition. Bergman propagated the incredibly short-sighted and reactionary thesis that the bourgeoisie could offer the masses—and these were his words—"bread and circuses." The U.S. working class could be bribed, he declared, for who knows how long, maybe indefinitely. U.S. imperialism was, in his estimation, swollen with reserves; actually, according to Bergman, echoing the likes of Paul Sweezy, U.S. imperialism had come up against a problem that Marx did not foresee: how to dispose of a vast pool of surplus brought on by automation and other such niceties—a surplus it didn't need to continually reconvert into capital to continue the exploitation of the workers here as well as in other countries. In line with this Bergman also postulated that the costs of maintaining the U.S. empire were greater than the benefits that accrued to it, implying with his characteristically mysterious manner that the imperialists had some choice in the matter, and once they woke up to this realization they would cast off imperialism. And with characteristic arrogance he stubbornly refused to study—Marxism-Leninism, especially—when it was pointed out to him that this "theory" of his was completely opposed to, and thoroughly refuted by, Marxist-Leninist political economy in general and its analysis of capitalist crisis in particular. And he even refused to recognize that his reactionary fantasies were refuted as well by the very developments of the present crisis.

Bergman did not fail to draw the appropriate conclusions from his "creative" political economy. There was nothing much of great importance that could be accomplished in the economic sphere—at least not in the way of building a revolutionary movement—so he contented himself with the most narrow trade unionism. He saw any hack with the faintest glimmering of militancy as a worthy leader of the working class and would habitually urge Party members to chase after every last one of them. Any kind of shop newsletter would be just fine—if it merely mirrored where the workers are at, so be it.

But what really counted with Bergman, what was of undeniable and enduring significance, was whatever trend happened to be in vogue among the petty bourgeoisie. Earlier it had been petty bourgeois adventurism, but this soon yielded to more staid and respectable reformism. Here the old CP in Bergman was brimming over. He saw no problem with joining up with the petty bourgeois radical stampede to McGovern in the 1972 Presidential elections; in fact, it was an urgent necessity. He was fascinated with Coleman Young, the bourgeois liberal Black mayor of Detroit, and even suggested that he could be part of the united front. It was the classical economist viewpoint—trade unionism for the workers coupled with reliance on petty bourgeois and even "enlightened"

bourgeois forces to carry on reformist political struggle.

At the same time Bergman declared the importance of what he called "the superstructure"—i.e. the importance of "changing the minds" of the masses and persuading them that capitalism was no good even though it could provide for their material needs and even continue to improve their lot materially. This may seem ironic in light of the fact that Bergman is now playing a leading role among the philistines who attack the RCP because we give any emphasis to struggle in the ideological realm, even though we do not treat it as the main arena of class struggle overall. But there is an underlying unity between the line of Bergman at that time and the vulgar materialism in which Bergman and Jarvis have found common cause. Both are fundamentally idealist and metaphysical; both pose material reality against consciousness and make a break between the two. The first—Bergman's earlier line—denies that consciousness is rooted in the material world, and in particular that the revolutionary class consciousness characteristic of the proletariat has a material base in the position of the proletariat in society, including in advanced capitalist society like the U.S. The second—Jarvis' crude determinism—denies that consciousness can be transformed into matter, that revolutionary theory and line can be grasped by the masses and become a powerful force changing not only the material world but the masses as well in the process.

Thus, even at the time of the founding of the Party, though embracing logically opposite positions—and though it can be said for Bergman that he was consistent in his revisionism—Jarvis with his "left" economism and Bergman with his trade unionism basically combined with liberal reformism hewed to the same stupidity. Each in his own way was taken in by appearances, Bergman by U.S. imperialism's ability to overcome the recessions of the '50s and undergo its most rapid period of post-war growth in the '60s, and Jarvis by the contraction of '74-'75. The latter saw a fateful collapse approaching soon, the former saw the eternal rule of the bourgeoisie. Both wrote off the need for revolutionary work—one because it was not necessary, the other because it was not possible. Neither understood the real nature of the crisis and the new spiral and neither knew nor cared to know a whit of what communist work was all about. Both would be in each others arms as the two-line struggle in the Party came to a climax, with Jarvis actually embracing Bergman's entire revisionist program.

The complete absence of dialectics in the approach of these Mensheviks brings to mind a certain kind of thinking which is described well in an article from a 1974 issue of the *Peking Review*: "To see things in a straight line way is in fact a metaphysical way of thinking and is like 'eating without emptying the bowels' and

'sleeping without getting up.' Anyone using this way of thinking in observing things inevitably fails to see what is the essence and what is the appearance, which is the mainstream and which is the tributary, which is the part and which is the whole. This way of thinking leads to blind optimism and loss of vigilance when revolution develops successfully, and to indolence, helplessness, pessimism and despondency when revolution faces difficulty and twists and turns."

### STRUGGLE OVER '76 CC REPORT

By 1976 the growth rate of the U.S. began to approach its post-war annual average. This was a partial and halting advance, a small bubble of recovery that showed every sign of bursting as it continued through 1977. Not even the bourgeoisie was taken in by this. But when the collapse which Jarvis had been banking on failed to materialize and when some of the initial outrage and struggle of the masses subsided as the situation underwent partial and temporary stabilization, he flipped over to a new sort of determinism. Whereas before his camp had alleged that the economy would come tumbling down, making it possible to move straight forward to revolution by waging the economic struggle, now in their view the relative stability of U.S. imperialism determined that very little—except the most narrow economic work—could be undertaken. The U.S. working class had been beaten down over the years and it became necessary to adapt working class politics to a working class saturated with reformism and anti-communism. The vision of the self-destruction of U.S. imperialism was now superceded by an imperialism which had effectively stupefied its working class and which had, for the time being at least, weathered the storms of economic adversity. Ironically enough, this was a view that was initially draped in some militant garb.

At the Second Plenary of the Party's First Central Committee in 1976, a paper, which formed the foundation for what came to be known as the "high road" Report, was presented by Comrade Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee. This Report further developed the Party's analysis of crisis, war and revolution. The Report emphasized that despite partial and temporary ups within the crisis, it would continue to deepen and that things had entered a specific downward spiral—not a straight-line down, as it pointed out. This spiral could only give way to another one through war, revolution, or most likely some combination of the two on a world scale. Moreover, though it was not inevitable, the process of development of this spiral would "raise the prospect of proletarian revolution" in the U.S. and other countries. Yet, this Report continued, at the present time the struggles of the masses were not

at a high pitch and, generally speaking, there was much confusion among the broad masses. This was due to the fact that we are in the beginning stages of this spiral.

Precisely because these underlying trends were not so evident but would, at a certain point nevertheless result in a rapid and qualitative change in the conditions of society and the mood of the masses, thereby opening new opportunities for the conscious forces, the Report laid great stress on understanding the nature and unfolding of the laws which operate in society. The new spiral spoken of referred to the objective conditions that the working out of these laws have given and will continue to give rise to. A spiral is exactly that—a course of development with a definite direction, though marked with twists and turns, zigs and zags, which results in things moving to a new and qualitatively different stage. This movement is towards deeper crisis and world war, and this latter in particular was seen as a likelihood for the decade of the '80s. It was with this perspective of sudden and big changes occurring and the possibility of a revolutionary situation developing that the Party's work must be carried out.

The Mensheviks would have none of this. They wailed and whined that current conditions were being made out to be more difficult than they were. They charged that the Report limited the gains that could be made, while they tried to salvage what they could from the Report by suggesting that its main point was not doing our work in such a way as to promote revolutionary struggles and prepare ourselves and the masses for the big changes that would take place, but simply to wage big battles with small forces. They posed this in opposition to the Report's emphasis that all our work, including waging these big battles, must be linked with our final goal and that in all of today's battles we come straight up against the fact that there are laws in society and how these laws operate. To leave things at the level of fighting the effects of the underlying contradictions conditioning the development of capitalism in general and the current crisis in particular is not fundamentally going to change things—so we must help the workers to consciously direct their struggles at the cause.

For all their bravado and self-proclaimed militancy, what the Mensheviks objected to in this Report was precisely its revolutionary outlook. What bothered them was the Report's indictment of a tendency to narrowness and economism in much of the Party's work. According to their twisted logic, if you couldn't do economist work, you couldn't accomplish anything. After all, with the working class so backward, what more could you do? The worst possible thing would be for us to separate ourselves from the workers by engaging in activities that do not promise palpable results, which might, heaven forbid, arouse some controversy, but

which would raise consciousness as well.

These Mensheviks became preoccupied with the question, how do you get things going or, in their lexicon, "spinning." It was like some religious test of will or wits. It wasn't even the bourgeoisie in their eyes, but the working class, that was an immovable object. And when it was moving or you could get it to move, never mind giving revolutionary leadership, just keep things going, take up each battle as it comes and just make sure that you're at the head of things.

Hence their fondness for gimmicks and stunts. They had no sense that there were big forces at work in society that would propel millions into motion, and that the essential point is not getting things going, but leading people forward toward revolution. For the Mensheviks there were no forces operating in society and pushing things in a certain direction; rather objective reality was just there, kind of like a brick wall, with no laws of development. The changes and development of the objective situation matter for little; in fact, the only thing that really counts is how hyped-up people can get.

The ludicrous proportions to which all this has been taken can be gleaned from the May Day speech of their "Revolutionary Workers Headquarters" excerpted in their so-called "Worker." In place of any real politics and any real analysis of the context in which people are fighting we are simply told that "In 1968 people thought big. Thinking big in 1968 meant building organizations, building movements. . . ." And once again we are implored to do likewise today, "In 1978 we again have to start thinking big." As though all that stands between the masses and revolution is lack of ambition and sheer nerve. But this crude exaggeration of the subjective factor is nothing more than a thin cover to get some narrow and economist work going. Because, naturally, all that can happen is what we can make happen.

#### "PALPABLE RESULTS" AND GIMMICKS

It was not beneath the Mensheviks to revert to the doomsday prognostications of their earlier period, though now it was for decidedly more limited ends—to get things "spinning." Take their campaign against the cuts in unemployment benefits which has been analyzed in the March 1978 issue of *Revolution* (p. 2). They built this campaign like a pack of Chicken Littles: "the sky is falling, we'll all be in \$2.00 an hour jobs, it's now or never, either we beat back the 'Carter Offensive' or we're finished." But they gave people no real understanding of why these cuts were coming down and how they related to the development of crisis. Instead, it was Carter, evil incarnate. They portrayed the industrial reserve army

as the handiwork of the capitalists, something they had cooked up or consciously decided to swell in order to depress the wages of the employed. The reserve army was not, as they saw things, an objective outgrowth of the anarchy of capitalism and the inevitable crises it leads to; no, it was just another aspect of Keynesian fine-tuning—add a little unemployment here, subtract a few wages there and, presto!, you have the "Carter Offensive." But, we were assured, with the right combination of pressure group and crowd-pleaser tactics we could beat back this "policy" of cuts and slave labor jobs.

To see how our Mensheviks treat the question of unemployment in such a reformist way, the reader can turn to the second issue of the Menshevik "Worker." There they try to breathe new life into their "Carter's Unemployment Offensive" line in an article purporting to be a major analysis of unemployment. In this article the question of and basis for crisis and the basic contradiction between the forces and relations of production apparently escapes their attention once again. But apart from such "minor" omissions, we are treated to a rather blatantly social-democratic thesis, including such gems as the following: "So the record of the private economy in the last three years is not that of a dynamic job creator, as Carter would have us believe. The capitalists' economy has failed to substantially create jobs and reduce real unemployment (even in the public sector, as shown before). Secondly, the jobs created by the economy are in low wage and non-union service areas, which has only pushed more and more people into an already crowded job market. Finally, instead of working to reduce the crippling effects of the laws of the capitalist economy, Carter's policies are designed to *increase* the desperation of the unemployed by cutting benefits and intensifying competition for jobs. This serves to help the bosses drive down pay and benefits and enforce stricter discipline on the job." (p. 8, emphasis in original)

What comes through in this paragraph and the article as a whole is not an analysis of a capitalist system, which because of its own internal contradictions is enmeshed in a deepening crisis; instead what we get is a picture where the "private sector" of the economy has a poor record for creating jobs and the "public sector"—i.e., Carter—won't create them. And where the Mensheviks do touch on the laws of capitalism it is only to make a mockery of them, levelling the harshest indictment at Carter, who just hasn't been doing enough to "reduce their crippling effects." Instead of this, you see, he's been trying to "increase the desperation of the unemployed." The logical conclusion that flows from this is that if Carter can decide to increase this desperation he could just as well decide to decrease it—provided we can convince him. And this is precisely the kind of pressure group orientation towards the

workers' struggle that the whole Menshevik analysis leads to.

In the same vein, in the last issue of *The Steelworker* newspaper that was produced under their editorial direction\* the Mensheviks emblazoned the front page with the headline "Industry Closing Down—Mills Closing Everywhere." Once again the sky was falling. There was no attempt to analyze how the efforts of the steel capitalists to reorganize the industry were linked with the overall crisis, how the crisis has been unfolding, and how these shutdowns represented a challenge to the whole working class requiring more advanced forms of struggle to marshal the strength of the whole class. If you couldn't scare the workers with this "industry shutting down" stuff into thinking big then you had to cast about for some gimmick to get things going. So one of these Mensheviks began advocating that a fight be taken up for Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) money. After all, what could be better than palpable results, even if the TRA is a protectionist act not only designed to strengthen the hand of U.S. industry but also to short-circuit and deflect away from its target the struggle of workers.†

The Mensheviks, therefore, were not entirely unaware of the seriousness of the crisis; how could they be, it stared them in the face. They just couldn't reconcile themselves to the fact this is an inescapable feature of capitalism, rooted in its very nature. They would grasp at any straw to deny that the laws of capitalism act in a definite way which makes it impossible to win any but the most temporary concessions. And they needed some assurance that you could win something, here and now. Surely, they reasoned, conditions can't be all that "tough" because if they were, how could we

\**The Steelworker* is a rank and file newsletter which, despite the considerable negative influence of the Mensheviks on it in the past, has played an important role in the struggles of steel workers. In recent months, as part of the struggle against the Mensheviks and their line and followers not only in the Party but in a number of mass organizations as well *The Steelworker* has broken with these opportunists and has more thoroughly broken out of the narrow confines which they tried to confine it within. Meanwhile, as pointed out in the July 1978 *Revolution* (p.20), "The Mensheviks, it seems, are putting out something they call 'The Steelworker,' in a pitiful attempt to peddle their economism and syndicalism; but this should not be confused with *The Steelworker*, which having broken with the Menshevik line is playing an important part in building a class conscious movement of steel workers as part of the overall struggle of the working class, and its allies, against capitalism."

†The July 1978 *Revolution* (p. 21) noted that "While it is not wrong in every case to join with a particular struggle involving the TRA, it is always the responsibility of communists and advanced forces to point out what the TRA represents overall and what the capitalists and their agents are attempting to do with it. But more than that, what these Mensheviks were trying to do by concocting a way to kick off struggle around the TRA in steel was to find some way to gimmick the workers into action by appealing to the most narrow and backward sentiments and playing into the hands of the steel barons and the capitalist class as a whole."

get the workers moving.

A fine example of this glossing over of laws was an article they submitted for publication in *Revolution* on the AMC shutdowns in Wisconsin. In this draft they negated the anarchy of capitalism, the fact that the capitalists cannot rationally organize and plan production. The press of competition forces each to produce and expand as though there were no limit, but there is a limit in the production and private appropriation of surplus value. And so there is disorder and dislocation, shutdowns and bankruptcies, and there is crisis, all of which happens independent of the level of development of the class struggle.

The Mensheviks, on the other hand, reduced the layoffs and shutdowns to the "profit drive" of AMC, presented in the most narrow terms. Ranged against this profit drive was the resistance of the workers. What you had was two opposed forces colliding with each other, the capitalists and their profit drive and the workers and their resistance. There is constant tussle in this view, but who eventually wins the particular battles depends on the balance of strength at any given time. The point they were trying to make was that if you fought hard enough you could beat back this profit drive and force the plant to reopen. It is not wrong to fight for a concession such as this and not impossible under all circumstances to win such a demand in the short run—but to present battles like this as essentially the sum and substance of the class struggle and to make such a demand the highest object of the workers' struggle is to wallow in economism and reformism.

This line was based on a distortion of Marx' observation in *Wages, Price and Profit* that the tendency of capital is to push the standard of wages down to its minimum limit, that is to crush and degrade the workers. Marx points out that the workers must fight back against this, that it would be the height of cowardice to renounce the fight against these encroachments and that unless workers wage this fight they will be broken, degraded and incapable of "the initiating of any larger movement." But the fundamental law that he is describing is not that workers can resist these attacks and secure some temporary improvements which "retard" this downward movement, but that these everyday struggles are only over the "effects" of capitalism. No matter how hard the working class fights to limit this downward movement, the direction is still down—this is the law. What Marx emphasizes is that "the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate workings of these everyday struggles," but must go over to the revolutionary struggle to abolish wage-slavery.

In the hands of the Mensheviks, Marx's point about the necessity of resisting these "encroachments" got twisted into a strategy to "hold the line." These Mensheviks bristled with rage when revo-

lutionary Party leaders tried to help them understand these laws and the political importance of arming the workers with an understanding of them as a crucial part of building the working class movement. They wanted an instant game plan which would keep the plant open, the sort of thing Jarvis has—without any real justification—built his reputation on. Later for empty talk about laws.\*

The Mensheviks would try to pose the question “can you fight layoffs and shutdowns?” in totally bourgeois terms. The bourgeoisie says no. We say you can—if you fight hard enough. This is how they approached it. The correct orientation is that the working class will not permit the capitalists to crush it and will resist the “encroachments” of the capitalists. But no matter how hard we fight there is no guarantee we can win any particular battle and, most fundamentally, we cannot eliminate layoffs and shutdowns from happening except by developing our fight into an all-round struggle to overthrow the rule of capital and carrying it through. So while striving to win what can be won, we must enter into all these battles with an eye towards building up our strength and understanding so we can eventually get rid of this system which gives rise to such evils.

Are there real difficulties in doing revolutionary work in this period? Yes, there are. Are bourgeois influences widespread in the working class? Yes, they are. Does this mean there's nothing we can do? Absolutely not. But what we do now must be consciously linked to what is developing. The Mensheviks could not see that far ahead.

It is very important to recognize the cumulative effect and impact of the period of relative stability since the end of World War 2 on the position and consciousness of the working class in this country especially. There did occur improvements in the living standards of large sections of the U.S. working class as the ruling class was able to make concessions to many workers and, on this basis, sow illusions about continual improvement in people's lives. But equally important to recognize is that this bourgeoisification is be-

\* (The 1976 Central Committee Report referred to earlier actually dealt with some of the questions arising out of this and similar struggles where plants were shutting down or going bankrupt and demanding that workers take wage cuts to save their jobs. It pointed out, for example, “there isn't any way in the world that we can guarantee that American Motors isn't going to go broke. We can do anything we want, in fact work for \$1 an hour and we still can't guarantee that American Motors won't go broke. We have to explain to them [the workers] in a living way that there are laws that are much bigger than American Motors or even the auto industry. We have to take the stand that if they are going to go broke we'd rather have them go broke with us making \$7 an hour than with us making \$4 an hour—and with us in a stronger position to continue the fight against them as a class.”—see pamphlet *Revolutionary Work In A Non-Revolutionary Situation*, p. 37)

ing undercut by the development of the crisis and that, in fact, this process of undercutting is now the principal aspect. The Jarvis-led forces borrowed, tampered with, and rendered reactionary this analysis. Again, after the bankruptcy of their imminent collapse line became clear, they did not see this spiral for what it was—in its motion and development—but latched on to a secondary aspect, the persistence of bourgeoisification and the remaining reserves of the U.S. imperialists.

Here an analysis of how Engels had sought to explain the absence of a socialist movement among British workers in the second half of the 19th century will be helpful. He showed that Britain had been on the upward curve of capitalist development, especially during the years 1848-68 when it experienced unparalleled expansion. It enjoyed an industrial and trade monopoly ruthlessly upheld by its enforcement of free trade. It held the lion's share of colonies at that time. Its superior position enabled it to build up a rather large and influential labor aristocracy and this resulted, also, in a slight betterment in the lot of other sections of the working class. But, Engels pointed out, this monopoly position, which was the “pivot” of the British social system, was being undermined by the very workings of capitalist development—as other countries started catching up with Britain and competed more viciously with her. Once again, Engels declared, a socialist movement would appear as the conditions of the British workers deteriorated. It was inevitable.\*

Jarvis often stuck his nose in these writings, but never seemed to grasp the central point. His student acolytes took this question of bourgeoisification and made it the theoretical underpinning for the reactionary argument that the name of the Party's youth group should not be the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade—that is, that it should not have “communist” in the name. In their notorious appeal to the Party Center† they claimed that it bordered on the suicidal to do open communist work in this period. After all, they whined, the working class had been without a vanguard for well over 20 years and the bourgeoisie has “been beating

\* In fact, as Engels had predicted, a socialist movement did develop within the British working class movement at the end of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century. But for various reasons, communists did not succeed in thoroughly breaking the hold of reactionary Social-Democracy on the working class. Such Social-Democrats, who joined the ranks of the social-chauvinists in World War 1 and have continued to betray the working class ever since, still hold a dominant influence over the workers in England and some other countries. In a number of countries, however, they have been replaced in their role as the primary props of reaction within the workers' movement by the revisionist communist parties that were formerly part of the Third International.

† Reprinted as part of a RCP pamphlet, *Communism and Revolution Vs. Revisionism and Reformism*.



the s--- out of socialism." How could we possibly lead big battles with communism such a hated word? What these Mensheviks did was to take the Party's analysis that we were in the *beginning* stages of a new spiral to drag things back to the "Life of Riley" and the '50s. There had been no forward development of the struggles of the masses, the balance of forces internationally was unchanged, and bourgeoisification was as strong as ever. Pity the misbegotten and deluded communists.

They deliberately obscured the essence of the Party's analysis of why this new spiral was an advance. It was not—as they would expect in their empiricist way—because right now, before your very own eyes, there was a high tide of resistance, but because this was a spiral whose further development "will lead to the real prospect of proletarian revolution." Nowhere did the Party leadership suggest that being a communist was easy or popular—or that this was a correct criteria for communists in any case. What was insisted on was that doing communist work was the only way that the Party would be able to lead the masses forward now, and decisively forward when a revolutionary situation developed. When you got down to it, for the Mensheviks—who had no sense of dialectics as well as no grasp of materialism—nothing was turning into its opposite, like bourgeoisification, and most of all there was not nor could there be any communism, either as a social force in the U.S. working class today or as a social system in the world in the future.

The upshot of all this has been their total abandonment of revolution and, in essence, making everything a matter of whether or not you can get a raise under capitalism. When in 1975 it seemed like you couldn't, then the question of revolution was posed—in the narrow way we have described. When later it appeared as though the bottom wasn't about to fall out, then the working class was hopelessly bought off, though it was still possible to piddle around in the economic struggle. That being the case, now it became the Mensheviks' turn to offer the workers some "bread and circuses": "big battles" for a raise, winning union positions with promises of "palpable results" and periodically a public relations stunt to pressure the politicians to stop attacking and start helping the workers. War? That needn't concern us now. Ideological and political work? We mustn't separate ourselves from the workers. Revolution? Come on, you must be kidding.

For a glimpse of how far the Jarvis forces have gone in taking up Bergman's general program one need look no farther than the second issue of their sham edition of "The Worker." We are treated to the most incredible analysis of Mayor Frank Rizzo of Philadelphia, which rivals, if not surpasses, the CP's ravings about Nixon a few years ago. We are told that "public outrage jolted Black members of the City Council into action, calling for his im-

peachment." Rizzo has become more dangerous than the bourgeoisie. "*His* police are infamous for harassing, brutalizing and murdering minorities. . . while wrecking public transit, he channelled \$300 million in tax dollars to build an 8 block subway spur" (for the well-to-do, emphasis ours). It's Rizzo's attacks. It's Rizzo who's responsible for a white racist movement. It's Rizzo who is a "deadly enemy of the people of Philadelphia and the whole country." It's Rizzo who must be stopped. It's Bergman's petty-bourgeois outrage and reformism and, who knows, maybe it'll be Coleman Young that these Mensheviks will be plumping for next.

### OLD CP'S DEGENERATION AND VIEW OF CRISIS

The entire process of the Jarvis-Bergman cabal's full retreat into the revisionism they bask in today certainly warrants study. In particular the path we have traced out from 1975 to the present is highly instructive. The trajectory travelled by Jarvis is not without precedent in the history of the workers movement in this country; in fact, he seemed bent on deepening the errors of earlier communists and the old CP.

In the early '30s, when the CP had begun to establish its leadership in the growing mass movements against the attacks of the bourgeoisie, it put forward what was called the "revolutionary way out of the crisis." In the book *Towards a Soviet America*, which contained a powerful indictment of the capitalist system and a compelling vision of socialism, William Z. Foster, a former top leader of the CP, explained what was meant by this revolutionary way out of the crisis in calling for militant resistance to the onslaught of the bourgeoisie: "To escape the encroaching capitalist starvation and to emancipate themselves, the workers of the world, including those in this country, must and will take the revolutionary way out of the crisis. That is, they will carry out a militant policy now in defense of their daily interests and, finally, following the example of the Russian workers, they will abolish capitalism and establish socialism." While the workers' struggles were, at that time, defensive and scattered, Foster indicated that the increasing difficulties of securing even the most minimal and partial demands would encourage greater militancy and bring them into sharper contradiction with the capitalist state. Developing these scattered economic battles on to a higher and higher political level was at the core of this "revolutionary way out."

The problem with this perspective was not the wholly correct emphasis on the antagonistic interests between the working class and the bourgeoisie, nor the insistence that the working class must resolutely defend its basic interests and begin to take the offensive against the ruling class, nor the recognition that the workers'



movement could make great strides in that period. This line had two related problems. It mistook the severe dislocations of the initial stages of the depression of the 1930s for a revolutionary situation—when, in fact, the bourgeoisie still had considerable room for maneuver and when the workers in their great numbers were by no means in a revolutionary mood. Still more, this line projected a strategy of intensified economic struggle, led by the CP, passing over to a revolutionary conquest of power.

The CP did put forward important political and social demands—for example, against war preparations and in support of the rights of Black people. But the Party's strategy was anchored in the assumption that economic conflicts would, in Foster's words, "develop into major political struggles." Foster even went so far as to cite the example of the mutiny in the German naval fleet at the end of World War 1 over the cutting off of soap rations. But what was key about this was not what it was over but the fact that it was the product of a war that dragged on for years, of deepening crisis and tremendous social discontent. And whether or not the masses move forward to take up the struggle for power when the situation does ripen depends on whether the Party of the working class has carried on all-round political work, arming the masses with an understanding of the laws of society, imbuing the workers with a sense of their place and role in history, developing the movement of the working class into a conscious one to put an end to capitalism and all the oppression it causes. A revolutionary situation is prepared by an entire course of events that will, as a part of this, result in sharper economic struggles; but such a situation will result in a great and sudden change in the conditions facing the masses and will require that the consciousness and organization of the advanced be kept "tense," as Lenin put it, so there will, indeed, be a revolutionary way out.

A revolutionary situation did not exist in the U.S. when Foster wrote his book, nor did it come to pass. As the bourgeoisie demonstrated a certain capacity to make concessions—based on its remaining reserves—the CP increasingly came to see the daily battles as ends in themselves. These struggles which were thought to be part of an arc leading to revolution were now separated from that goal; instead the CP aspired to jockey for position and influence at the head of these struggles.

Following World War 2 the CP predicted another economic collapse and once again put forward the idea that "the only way it [the working class] can protect and improve its living standards is by taking the road that eventually leads to socialism." But this road came to be defined as going through a series of stages in which the power of the capitalists would be curbed and restrained. Awestruck by the temporary strength of U.S. imperialism—which

strength could be understood by analyzing the outcome and settlement of World War 2, which itself was a product of the workings of the laws of capitalism, laws which continue to operate and will eventually lead to a revolutionary situation—the CP gave up the goal of revolution completely.

What links the earlier period of the CP with its later degeneration was this sort of pragmatism that prevented it from being rooted in an understanding of the laws of society and the science of revolution. Starting with the perspective that there would be a straight line development of the crisis to revolution, the CP then denied that there were any laws of capitalist society, or if there were any, not the sort that would lead to great disorder which places the question of revolution—violent revolution—on the front burner. Again, it is easy to be taken in by appearances, particularly in an imperialist country and especially in the spiral coming off World War 2 when U.S. imperialism temporarily commanded an unparalleled position of strength.

For Jarvis the existence of underlying laws was bound up with immediately recognizable changes. Where there were some changes, as in the downturn of '74-75, then he would concede the existence of these laws. Where there were no changes of the magnitude which would constitute a revolutionary situation or even give rise immediately to a large upsurge then these laws either didn't exist or were not of much consequence. As this '74-75 downturn failed to play itself out immediately as Jarvis had wished, and as bourgeoisification did remain a factor in the struggle and outlook of the working class, Jarvis pretty much wound up with the view that the only trend was a succession of particular and isolated battles. There was only "today's" conditions and the "actual" struggles of the masses. Nothing gave rise to anything else. There could be no sense of preparing for revolution by doing revolutionary work in a non-revolutionary situation. To understand and base ourselves on the forces at work internationally and in U.S. society leading towards deeper crisis, war and, perhaps, the prospect of revolution was, according to the Jarvis forces, "left idealist." To grab hold of what was superficial and transient (the relative temporary stability of U.S. imperialism) was somehow profound and worthy of commendation. To tail behind the bourgeoisification in the working class was their highest ideal—a rightist ideal—since it was the only way to possibly link up with the masses in this period.

One would expect the reformist view of the crisis and class struggle of these Mensheviks to whet their appetite for populism which has been a major bourgeois influence in the history of the U.S. workers movement and the CP. And the Mensheviks don't let us down. In the same issue of the bogus "Worker" referred to earlier we find yet another analysis—if one can be so generous—this time

dealing with the farmers.

What is most revealing here is the manner in which they treat the farmers' struggle. There is no analysis of the class position of these farmers, how this influences their outlook, and how the working class unites with the progressive aspects of this struggle—which are principal—but at the same time takes into account the contradictory character of some of the farmers' demands. The refusal of the Mensheviks to do this reduces the united front to a coalition of the small people (essentially the same as the CP's anti-monopoly coalition) and ultimately makes it impossible for the working class to unite with and give leadership to such struggles. Instead they adopt the outlook of the petty-bourgeois proprietor and in their customary "oops, we let it all hang out" way conclude with this: "The farmers' experience in fighting the government, and the attention their bold actions have attracted have shone a bright light on the criminal absurdity of the whole capitalist system. Farmers, workers and scientists have given this country an incredibly efficient and productive agriculture, *yet a man can't even make a decent living growing food.*" (emphasis ours)

This would be a priceless piece of Americana, if these weren't alleged communists. Never mind the exploitation and oppression of capitalism. Never mind its inability to rationally organize production. It's just that a man can't make a good buck anymore, you know, like in the good old days.

### MENSHEVIKS POKE AROUND IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

The Mensheviks neither understand the general laws of capitalism, especially as they apply in the era of imperialism, nor the nature of this new spiral. Our Party holds that U.S. imperialism as well as the imperialist system as a whole is enmeshed in a major and deepening crisis. The more immediate causes of the crisis lie in the very means and measures taken by U.S. imperialism to stave off such crisis following World War 2. These things—like deficit spending, the rebuilding of Europe, military aggression to prop up the U.S. empire, etc.—have turned into their opposite. The unsuccessful attempts at tinkering with various fiscal and monetary stimulants or restraints over the last few years have forced the bourgeoisie to wonder aloud about the effectiveness of any sort of economics, and to predict a new era of no or slow growth.

A definite spiral of development occurred in the wake of World War 2. The U.S. had not only prevailed over its main antagonists in the war, Germany and Japan, but over the other victors among the imperialists as well, France, England, etc. U.S. hegemony rested astride two pillars—the penetration of the former colonies of the other imperialists mainly through the practice of neo-colonialism,

and the immense restructuring and centralizing of capital in Europe and Japan, and in the U.S. itself. All this was backed up by U.S. imperialism's military might which was dialectically related to its economic strength.

U.S. imperialism was able, on this basis, to ward off crisis in the U.S. and the other capitalist countries, though development proceeded unevenly. In fact, the expansion characteristic of the period of the '50s and '60s was interrupted with frequent recessions. Yet these recessions were not the dominant feature of the period, and they did not appear simultaneously throughout the capitalist countries. The counteracting forces—stemming from the pre-eminent position of U.S. imperialism in all but the socialist countries—made it possible for the U.S. imperialists to temporarily resolve overproduction crises by shifting the weight on to others. There was, in a word, room for maneuver, though this whole process was, as mentioned, turning into its opposite in the form of inflation, intensified inter-imperialist competition and rising struggles for national liberation and independence. And, of course, the restoration of capitalism in the USSR during this period was a most significant development which, especially as the Soviet Union fully emerged as an imperialist superpower itself, was increasingly to present a most serious challenge to the U.S. as the top-dog imperialist power and limit its maneuvering room.

The recessions of the '50s and '60s in the U.S. did not play their classic role of restructuring capital and laying the basis for renewed advance, as under conditions of competitive capitalism. This was for two reasons. One is particular to the period we are discussing, where the international position of U.S. imperialism and the advantages it temporarily derived significantly blunted the impact of these recessions. Second, is a point which is general to the period of imperialism. That is, while we are speaking of an interval of expansion following the war, this is occurring in the era of imperialism which is marked by the decline of the system of capitalism, by stagnation and decay. Such crises cannot have the recuperative powers and effects of crises in the same way as under competitive capitalism. They cannot in any but the most fragmentary way push things forward.

Imperialism is a definite stage—the highest stage—of capitalism in which the development of the productive forces is severely retarded and constrained by the relations of production. This does not rule out the rapid growth of certain sectors and new technologies or periods of expansion. But imperialism is not a vigorous capitalism developing through the boom/bust cycle. It is marked by violent outbursts of crisis and war, and it is the era of proletarian revolution.

Up until now we have been arguing with phantoms of a sort. Jar-

vis did not choose to pen his weighty thoughts, perhaps because they were so constantly blowing with the wind, but at least as much because his distinctive brand of opportunism left it to others to take the rap for his rotten lines. Bergman would let you know what he thought—but always off the top of his head. Nonetheless, the Mensheviks did achieve a certain division of labor as regards theory. Jarvis would specialize in treating it in a cookbook kind of way—how to get things brewing—while others were encouraged to treat it as some sort of academic exercise.

One of the Mensheviks' "political economists" showed himself quite adept at this and several of his distortions of Marxist political economy ran parallel to the lines we have been criticizing, though not all of them at the same time. On the question of stagnation, for instance, this Menshevik denied that there was much to it. In an early draft on the crisis submitted for publication in *The Communist* he took Paul Sweezy to task for his distorted and one-sided view that stagnation was the normal state of affairs of imperialism and that this would lead to its slow and gradual death unless it was rescued by "external stimuli" like war expenditures. But in doing so this Menshevik denied the significance of stagnation in the sense that Lenin uses it—meaning the tendency to retard the introduction of new inventions, machinery, etc.—thereby covering up the fact that imperialism is a definite stage of capitalism.

Sweezy, who rejects value categories, denies that there is anything internal to the process of accumulation that can arrest stagnation, that is, he denies that capital can accumulate more or less rapidly at times, just as he denies that crisis is a result of the overproduction of capital. Yet, stagnation is a feature of imperialism, but not, as Sweezy held, because it somehow obeys new laws like the "tendency of the surplus to rise." This comes about through the very operation of the laws of capital accumulation which manifest themselves in a tendency towards stagnation. This tendency is associated with the growth of monopoly which acts as a depressant against technological innovation.

This Menshevik in his submitted draft basically saw stagnation as being as much a feature of competitive as of monopoly capitalism, and not terribly significant at that. He took as his point of departure what Lenin said in discussing stagnation—that imperialism does not "exclude the possibility of the rapid growth of capitalism." But this was put forward in such a way as to negate the specificity of imperialism, that it is parasitic, moribund and decaying, exactly what Lenin was emphasizing as the principal aspect, even though he noted the possibility of rapid growth here and there as the secondary aspect.

The crux of the correct understanding is that under imperialism the contradiction between socialized production and private own-

ership is heightened and is more starkly revealed in decay, crisis, and war. Imperialism is a system in decline that cannot develop relatively smoothly through the normal workings of the business cycle; it cannot "cure" itself through cyclical recoveries. The article as it appeared in its final version, after major corrections were made by the Party's revolutionary leadership, points this out. Imperialism can only lunge forward and struggle for survival through the redivision of the world which is required by the unequal development between imperialist powers.

It was the terms of the redivision of the world following World War 2 that enabled U.S. imperialism to withstand periodic overproduction crises—and this is why stagnation was not the principal characteristic of the period of the '50s and '60s. But this tendency towards stagnation was present nonetheless, as evidenced in lower rates of growth than in previous historical periods, the gutting of certain sectors such as the railroads, the shortening of the cycle of recessions, and chronic underutilization of capacity. In sum, then, our Menshevik tended to answer Sweezy by going back to competitive capitalism and downplaying both the special features of imperialism which accounted for its underlying tendency towards stagnation and the ability, under the particular conditions we have described, of U.S. imperialism to temporarily ward off crisis.

#### MARXIST VIEW OF PROFIT RATE AND CRISIS

Marx describes the rate of profit as the motive power of capitalist production. But this "driving force" is also "endangered by the development of production itself." The international position of U.S. imperialism whereby it was the dominant exporter of capital, plundered Asia, Africa and Latin America, and imposed certain monetary and financial strictures on others, enabled it to counteract, for a time, the general tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

As capital accumulates there is an increase in the ratio of constant to variable capital—that is, as compared to the capital they exchange for labor power the capitalists lay out increasingly large sums of money on machinery, raw materials, fuel, etc. which themselves do not produce any value. This tends to depress the rate of profit since living labor—which produces value—figures as a smaller portion of the forces utilized by the capitalists in production. But this law acts only as a tendency because these changes in the composition of capital also bring about counter-tendencies, that is, increases in productivity which lower the value of machinery and raw materials—and labor power. Even as the rate of exploitation increases, however, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall cannot be permanently overcome since the ratio of constant to variable capital continues to increase.

So this falling rate of profit does not express itself as an absolute fall—at any given time this fall may or may not be observable—though it is an inherent part of the contradictory movement of capital. Our Menshevik economist declared that there was a straight line descent of the rate of profit and suggested that it could be quantitatively demonstrated to have fallen straight down since the end of World War 1. Besides being a statistical feat of rather impressive proportions, to prove such a dive, this conception corresponded nicely to Jarvis' earlier vision of collapse and, in some ways, it was this economist's answer to and equivalent of Sweezy's slow dance of death view of stagnation.

In fact, the significance of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall does not lie in its precise drop—it is not usually the direct and immediate trigger of a particular crisis. More important is what this tendency forces the capitalists to do in order to raise their mass and rate of profit and how it limits their ability to do this. For instance, the growing reliance on outside sources of finance, the competition for loan capital, the slowdown in capital investment, the rapid outflows from one sector to another are all expressions of this in the recent period. In 1974-75 the rate of profit had undoubtedly fallen. In 1976-77 it may have risen a bit. But this hasn't rescued the imperialists. This falling tendency is exerting its force within a new set of circumstances which no longer act in the main as a buffer against its effects.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF CURRENT CRISIS

It is possible to trace the main lines of development of this crisis. Its beginnings, as we mentioned earlier, were in the late '60s, with important international changes occurring, the most notable of which were U.S. imperialism's serious setbacks in Vietnam, the political and economic challenges from within the U.S. bloc, and the rise to superpower status of a Soviet Union where capitalism had been restored. But the crisis unfolds in the early '70s with two nodal points. The first is in 1971 when the convertibility of the dollar into gold is cancelled as unprecedented pressures on the dollar mount and record deficits are incurred by the U.S. The next two years see a slight upturn in investment, but the period witnesses an enormous acceleration of inflation, with the wholesale price index increasing at a rate of over 10% annually by 1973. There is all manner of speculation in international commodity and credit markets; in late 1973 oil prices are quadrupled; pressures on the financial markets intensify and a number of U.S. banks, as well as others abroad, are in deep difficulties.

By the fall of 1974 the second nodal point is reached: a major contraction sets in. Industrial production plummets to post-WW2

lows, unemployment reaches its all-time high since the 1930s and international trade is drastically reduced. Over the next three years industrial production rises gradually, there are some spurts of activity, but only in the U.S. does production attain its post-war average, yet at the same time in the U.S. there remains considerable unemployment and idle capacity, devastation of certain sectors like steel, and fixed capital investment actually declines in the period 1973-77. This so-called recovery celebrated its 3rd birthday in 1978 with renewed currency and trade complications within the U.S.-led bloc.

As serious as this crisis is, there is not now a revolutionary situation. The ruling class still has reserves and is able to maintain its rule with relative stability. How is this related to the onset of the crisis and its future development? We are in the beginning stages of this downward spiral and while its general movement is down, it remains possible for some expansion to occur—as it has. But—and this is key—the conditions that counteracted the downturns of the past spiral, the means by which the imperialists have extricated themselves in the past, have diminished. Hence the feebleness of the partial upturns.

There are two aspects to this situation, neither of which can be ignored. On the one hand, forces still exist to buoy up the U.S. bloc and within this for the U.S. to push off some of the losses and difficulties onto others. An example is the dollar. Its battering in the late '60s and early '70s, which was a product, in part, of changes in the competitive positions of the lesser imperialists of Europe and Japan, also led to certain further temporary gains for them. But the breakdown of the monetary and financial framework established following WW2, with the dollar as its linchpin, has not given way to another. The U.S. can still force foreign central banks and governments to pile up dollars; oil, for instance, is still denominated in it. And since their economies are so tied into that of the U.S., they do not want to see their hoard of dollars decline in value, so they actually take measures to strengthen it even as they struggle over currency devaluations. Also, as this crisis deepens we see an increasing role being played by financial institutions dominated by the U.S. like the International Monetary Fund which, through loans both to developed and backward countries, like Great Britain and Peru, which are in dire straits, extends its control.

But this is not a situation fundamentally characterized by stability, nor is it a situation that can last long. The U.S. has continuing strength to deal out some of the losses, but this is not hurtling things forward in any substantial kind of way. We find, for example, that while the U.S. imperialists can still rack up huge government deficits and expand their credit base, for the first time, earlier this year, the Federal Reserve was forced to directly adjust

(upward) domestic interest rates because of pressures on the dollar. Fundamentally, the U.S. does not have the freedom to overcome this, the most serious overproduction crisis it has faced since the 1930s Depression. This is the principal aspect of the situation with regard to the stability and reserves of the U.S. ruling class.

The crisis is deepening and the situation must lead to a qualitative change, whether that is a major depression, a world war or some combination of both. This is so because this crisis is unfolding against the backdrop of and in connection with the increasingly fierce political and military rivalry with the Soviet Union, rooted in the imperialist economic foundation of both superpowers. In other words this urging towards a war for re-division is not dictated solely by the severity and duration of the crisis, but stems mainly from the intensifying contention with another superpower which seeks a realignment and re-division commensurate with its growing strength relative to the U.S. This contention, however, is caused by the same economic laws and, dialectically, the seriousness of the crisis also requires that the U.S. go to war to prevent a re-division unfavorable to it—and ultimately to make a new re-division more favorable to it.

This is the main feature of the new spiral. The contention between the two superpowers—each of whose blocs is the main barrier to expansion of the other—is driving things closer to a world war. It is not possible to predict whether there will be a major economic collapse *before* this war breaks out, though there will undoubtedly be convulsive developments like last year's steel shut-downs, the worsening of monetary and trade difficulties, and gyrations in residential construction, for instance. Any recoveries will be all the more partial and temporary exactly because of the underlying and accelerating downward trend. But it is possible to predict that there can be no resolution of this crisis by the imperialists short of the re-division of the world. And while it is not possible to say for sure that this spiral will lead to a revolutionary situation in the U.S. itself, this does loom as a distinct possibility.

We have spoken repeatedly of laws and the need to grasp them. By laws we mean the expression and effect of the underlying relations and forces which govern the development of things, which define their movement. For the working class the significance of recognizing and understanding them is two-fold: these laws will result in qualitative leaps taking place, of the sort we have been describing, in the conditions of society and the mood of the masses, and we must prepare ourselves to seize the time when such a situation arises, even if it may appear a dim or distant prospect right now; and these laws stand as an indictment of capitalism and determine that only revolution can fundamentally change things. No matter what the intentions or policies of particular represen-

tatives of the ruling class, no matter what state the economy happens to be in at any given time, and no matter how sincere or earnest hopes for reform may be, capitalism is still capitalism—in fact in the U.S. today capitalism is in its highest and final stage, imperialism—and by its nature leads to crisis, war, and . . . revolution. Marx described capitalist production as the *self*-expansion of capital, precisely because there are such laws which make the capitalists the agents and not the initiators of the objective process under capitalism.

### REVISIONISTS REBEL AT THE PROSPECT OF REVOLUTION

This helps to explain why the Jarvis-Bergman clique chafed at the thought of basing ourselves on such laws. They were so politically obtuse (dull and philistine) they couldn't believe that big changes leading to the real prospect of a revolutionary situation might actually take place. But, also, they were never quite convinced that revolution was all that necessary to begin with. To admit the existence of such laws would imperil their fortunes as would-be saviors of the masses through reforms. The revolutionary line of our Party became their chief obstacle, and, failing to defeat this line, they tried to wreck the Party. Failing that, they took what they could and ran.

The path followed by the Bergman-Jarvis clique is extremely inviting, as we live in an imperialist country which is still powerful. What's more, it is well-travelled, as their revisionist mentors in the CP have blazed a trail for them. Initially Bergman and Jarvis were united in their dedication to narrow economic work. What mainly separated them was Bergman's penchant for liberal reformism in the political struggle while Jarvis generally took more of the ostrich approach, though he wasn't above an occasional political gimmick and a consistent attempt to turn real political struggle into a plaything for petty-bourgeois reformers.

But driven by the logic of his position and the force of events, Jarvis eventually came around to Bergman's view of crisis and the situation, and made the transition from "left" economism to all-round reformism as had the old CP, which Jarvis and Bergman took as their model.

Following in the wake of Khrushchev's coup and counter-revolutionary betrayal in the USSR the CP finally degenerated into thoroughgoing revisionism in the late 1950s. This kind of degeneration on the part of some who claim to be communists is inevitable, these kinds of twists and turns in the development of the revolutionary struggle are bound to occur. But as Mao Tsetung pointed out: "The world is progressing, the future is bright and no

one can change this general trend of history." Such is another law that our Mensheviks will never understand. ■

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## The "Tarnished Socialism" Thesis

### Some Recent Publications In Defense of Soviet Capitalism

C.R.

Ten years ago this August, Soviet tanks rolled through the streets of Prague, capital of supposedly independent Czechoslovakia. Though Czech leaders like Alexander Dubcek were themselves despicable revisionists, who refused to put up a fight against the invasion for fear the masses might get out of hand and extend the struggle to one for genuine liberation from the yoke of capital, people all over the world supported the just struggle of the people of Czechoslovakia against social-imperialist domination and demanded that the Soviet tanks get out.

This was also a time when in our own country the movement against the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam was developing rapidly, especially among students and youth. The massive rebellions which followed the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. had signalled the turning of a significant section of the Black liberation movement toward revolution. The rebellion of students at Columbia University was typical of many events which linked the struggle against the imperialist war with the Black liberation struggle and aimed both with a revolutionary thrust against the common enemy. And while Soviet troops were suppressing the youth of Prague, Mayor Daley's pigs were running amuck in the streets of Chicago, assaulting and beating thousands of young people who had gathered to protest outside the Democratic Party's national convention.

At this time there was widespread feeling among those active in these struggles, especially among the students, that the Soviet Union was no better than the U.S. Far from seeing the Soviet Union as a friend and ally as the revisionist CPUSA preached from the sidelines, the revolutionary students developed a rudimentary understanding that both superpowers were sworn enemies of the world's people and of revolutionary struggle. The majority of the student movement was thus outraged by and militantly opposed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, although correctly continu-

ing to direct their main fire at our own imperialist ruling class.

The mainly petty-bourgeois activists in these struggles could see that life in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Kosygin was hardly a model for the socialist system they'd begun to envision. They saw the Soviet Union as increasingly a depoliticized, bureaucratic and, at the very least, a boring society. For example, one student activist who would later become a leader of the "Weather Underground" terrorist group wrote an article describing her negative experience as an exchange student in Moscow. She called on Soviet students to rise up and build their own revolutionary student movement.

In this context the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, led by Mao Tsetung, played an extremely important role. Mao courageously and scientifically analyzed that the Soviet Union was no longer a socialist country, that capitalism had been restored there. And the Cultural Revolution which he initiated showed millions that the kind of degeneration which took place in the Soviet Union was not inevitable but could be prevented through resolute struggle by the masses against the capitalist roaders in the leadership of the Communist Party who were aiming to seize power.

This had a powerful effect on the budding revolutionary forces in the U.S. Among the revolutionary forces in the student movement and among the minority nationalities there was broad support for the principled stand of the Chinese Communist Party against the Soviet Union. At the Austin, Texas National Conference of SDS in 1969, a meeting marked by sharp struggle against the Trotskyite wrecking activity of the Progressive Labor Party, the entire body united in hooting down a lonely revisionist spokesman who sought to whitewash Soviet armed aggression against China's Chenpao Island. (Incidentally, this revisionist was at the time a close comrade of Mickey Jarvis, the Menshevik chieftain recently expelled from the RCP. Jarvis, a former CP member, also defended the Soviet Union at this conference.)

But for the overwhelming majority of those who had come forward in the course of these struggles, their understanding of the role of the Soviet Union was still mainly at the level of perceptual knowledge. People saw what the Soviet Union did and what it stood for and they knew they didn't like it any more than they liked the war in Indochina or the suppression of the Black Panther Party. But they were confused as to *why* this was so. Indeed, for many, this perceptual knowledge was colored by anti-Communism drummed into people's heads since kindergarten.

To move forward from perceptual to rational knowledge it is necessary to grasp and apply the science of revolution, Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. A small but highly significant

motion of these movements did just this. As part of embracing this science as the key to resolving the problems of the capitalist system through proletarian revolution, and in doing so deserting the petty bourgeoisie and joining with the working class, many activists also struggled to come to a more complete and scientific understanding of the nature of the Soviet Union and its role in the world. Publication of *Red Papers 7: How Capitalism Has Been Restored in the Soviet Union and What This Means for the World Struggle (RP7)* by the Revolutionary Union in 1974 played an important part in this.

But while some moved forward to grasp on a higher level the imperialist nature of the Soviet Union, others did not. Some simply fell prey to cynicism and defeatism, summing up from their perceptions that real change is impossible or, at best, too costly. Others continued to loudly denounce the Soviet Union—and even took up the position that it is the "main danger" to the world's people—but still without any thoroughgoing Marxist analysis behind this. These forces have thus hastened to embrace the same kind of revisionist garbage which the Soviet leaders preached when it emerged in slightly different form under different conditions. Not surprisingly, they view both the Cultural Revolution and the overwhelmingly positive thrust of the revolutionary movements of the '60s as "outdated."

Yet another group, however, began to reevaluate their perceptions. These people were influenced by the ebb in the revolutionary upsurge of the late '60s and early '70s, not seeing the fact that the capitalist system has entered a new spiral of crisis and war which, while only beginning, is a *major crisis*. They are struck by the fact that Soviet social-imperialism, which formerly colluded with the U.S. imperialists, selling out revolutionary struggle left and right, is now more and more contending with the U.S. for world domination (while continuing, as a secondary aspect, to collude in certain cases with the U.S. against mass struggle) and thus has adopted a more militant and offensive pose. With no faith in the masses, and only disdain for the revolutionary potential of the working class, such people now see in the Soviet Union a powerful force which might defeat U.S. imperialism.

#### FROM CRITICS TO APOLOGISTS

Like those who retreated to cynicism and those who would have the proletariat ride the coattails of its "own" bourgeoisie in a nationalist holy war against the Soviet superpower, these people seek to "chase the wisp of painless progress." They take the stand of the alienated petty-bourgeois intellectual who, in times of upsurge and struggle, becomes enthused with a crude populist love of the



masses but who, especially in a period of temporary and relative ebb, quickly turns away from the high, hard road of protracted struggle and revolutionary science characteristic of the proletariat, searching instead for a get-rich-quick scheme that might lead to change.

Such forces continue to criticize the Soviet Union in various ways and seek to remain independent of the more seasoned Soviet flunkys in the CPUSA. They try to play the role of "centrists," midway between Marxism and revisionism, although their "tilt" has for some time been clearly in the latter direction. Increasingly as, on the one hand, Marxist-Leninists oppose and expose the role of both superpowers on an ever more thoroughgoing and scientific basis and, on the other hand, as the contention between the superpowers heats up and forces people to, in one way or another, take a more clear stand, the "centrists" must now come out and openly defend the Soviet Union on a more sophisticated level. (Since their opposition to U.S. imperialism is on such a shallow level and since their reformist and elitist outlook prevents them from seriously "going against the tide," it is not at all unlikely, however, that many of these "centrists" will, in the event of a war, flip over into some segment of the patriotic camp.) There is a special necessity for them to carry on their defense of the Soviets under present conditions since Soviet propagandists themselves and their CP frontmen do such a lame job, merely advertising Soviet virtues. The "centrists," of course, recognize that what is needed is not mainly to *advertise* but to *apologize* for the Soviet Union.

All this explains the recent minor flurry of publications putting forward some version or another of the "tarnished socialism" thesis: the argument that the Soviet Union might not be so great, but it's still socialist and must be supported. This new apologist literature joins a series of Trotskyite tracts which argue that the Soviet Union is a "deformed workers state" (or degenerate, depraved or whatever other term they're using this week).\* But our new apologists are not classical Trotskyites. They don't return to the great line struggle of the 1920s and they certainly don't blame everything bad on Stalin. Indeed, they are quite ahistorical, rarely going back further than 1956, and for them, as shall be seen, line struggle under socialism (and capitalism too, for that matter) is hardly important since this only takes place "in the realm of ideas" and can't really change things. While the social base to which these writers appeal tends to be hostile to Stalin and to the dictatorship of the proletariat in general, these authors steer away

\*See, for example, the Spartacus Youth League's, *Trotskyism versus Maoism: Why the U.S.S.R. is Not Capitalist*, New York, 1977. Trotskyite and pseudo-Trotskyite literature on Soviet society is itself a subject that deserves thorough analysis; that, however, is beyond the scope of this particular article.

from any serious assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Stalin era. (Here the apologists' line is the mirror opposite of the phony "restorationist" analysis of Martin Nicolaus, whose work was criticized in a previous issue of *The Communist*). Even so, at least one apologist openly if superficially parades under the banner of "Stalinism."

This article focuses on the work of two authors. The first, our "Stalinist," is one Jonathan Aurthur, whose book, *Socialism in the Soviet Union*, is sponsored by the Communist Labor Party (CLP) of which he is apparently a member.\* CLP is a small sect which grew out of a thing called the Communist League (CL), which in turn grew out of a dogmatist split-off from the old CP, the Provisional Organizing Committee. CL was characterized by extreme dogmatism manifested in the practice of ripping advanced workers out of struggle in order to "train" them in a sectarian hothouse. This "left" in form line covered up a more deeply rooted rightism and pragmatism which fully came into the open with the "formation" of the CLP in 1975. Since then CLP has become a minor flea hovering around the CP dog. In the past CL branded Khrushchev and Brezhnev revisionists but stopped short of saying they'd restored capitalism. Now CLP is enthused by the Soviet Union's more offensive foreign policy. They lauded the 1976 25th Congress of the CPSU as a turning point in Soviet history and since then have been virtual cheerleaders (without much of an audience, however) for the Brezhnev gang.

The other apologist whose work is reviewed here is Al Szymanski, sociology professor at the University of Oregon and "movement activist," who published a critique of both *RP7* and Martin Nicolaus' book under the title "Socialism or Capitalism in the USSR?"† and followed this with a detailed defense of Soviet economic relations with foreign countries, "Soviet Social Imperialism, Myth or Reality: An Empirical Examination of the Chinese Thesis."‡ Szymanski is a veteran of the student anti-war movement (he participated in the Columbia University rebellion of 1968, but in that struggle's reformist wing) and has become somewhat prominent as a spokesman for "centrism" in the Northwest. He promises a book on the Soviet Union in the near future.

\*Jonathan Aurthur, *Socialism in the Soviet Union*, Workers Press, Chicago, 1977.

†Al Szymanski, "Socialism or Capitalism in the USSR?," *Science and Society*, Vol. XLI, No. 3, Fall 1977, pp. 338-344.

‡Albert Szymanski, "Soviet Social Imperialism, Myth or Reality: An Empirical Examination of the Chinese Thesis," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXII, 1977-1978, pp. 131-166.



While very real differences divide these two writers, taken together they concentrate their defense of Soviet capitalism on four main points. These are: (1) denial of the possibility of capitalist restoration in a socialist country, which is linked to denying that class struggle continues under socialism and especially that a new bourgeoisie emerges that is concentrated in the Communist Party itself; (2) denial that the Soviet economy functions according to the laws of capitalism; (3) denial that a bourgeois ruling class exists in the Soviet Union; and (4) denial that Soviet relations with other countries can be characterized as imperialist in the Leninist sense. In the following pages each of these points will be discussed, with reference made to each author where relevant.

### CLASS STRUGGLE UNDER SOCIALISM AND THE NEW BOURGEOISIE

Jonathan Aurthur begins his book by straightforwardly arguing that "capitalism has not been, and cannot be, restored in the Soviet Union or any other socialist country." History, he claims, moves forward in a continual upward spiral. The "form," the political superstructure of society, can be turned around; but the "content" of society, its economic base, the fundamental relations of production, cannot. According to Aurthur:

"Once a new mode of production has taken hold, counter-revolution can still attempt to force it backward. But it can succeed, if at all, only superficially. Its content is forced, on pain of extinction, to adapt itself to the new, more advanced economic reality, the new mode of production. And why? Because new modes of production (slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism) do not come upon or leave the historical scene arbitrarily, accidentally, ideologically, or at the whim of this or that individual or group, but as the result of the development of social production."<sup>2</sup>

While it is true that history moves forward in an upward spiral,<sup>3</sup> this does not rule out distinct reversals of this motion. As Lenin put it, "it is undialectical, unscientific and theoretically wrong to regard the course of world history as smooth and always in a forward direction, without occasional gigantic leaps back."<sup>4</sup> And there is certainly no rule which states that such leaps cannot be taken in the economic base as well as in the superstructure. Socialism and ultimately communism will inevitably triumph over capitalism, since only socialist revolution can resolve the con-

traditions of the capitalist system. And while the proletariat is advancing and will continue to advance, its struggle has never been and never will be without its twists and turns. As Mao Tsetung said, "the future is bright, the road is tortuous."<sup>5</sup>

The historical epoch of several centuries which saw the development of capitalism out of feudalism also witnessed many reversals for the rising capitalist production relations. In Renaissance Italy commodity production and trade developed to the point where merchant capital was beginning to be transformed into industrial capital, but for various reasons this did not come to fruition, the Italian city-states stagnated and the bourgeois revolution did not take place for another three centuries.

Another instructive example can be found in the transition from slave society to feudalism in China. This occurred over a period of several hundred years, beginning as early as about 600 B.C. It was not until 221 B.C., however, that China was unified under a feudal dictatorship, headed by emperor Chin Shih-Huang, who upheld and implemented the Legalist line and program representing the rising landlord class, ruthlessly suppressed the counter-revolutionary restorationists and brought about the thoroughgoing triumph of feudalism over slavery throughout China at that time. Previous to that, during a long period, although the feudal class had on the whole superseded the slaveowning class well before Chin Shih-Huang came to power, the slaveowners still had power in certain areas and there were repeated attempts by the slaveowners, represented by such famous historical figures as Confucius and then Mencius (and their followers), to restore the old order in China as a whole. And even after Chin Shih-Huang unified China under feudal rule there were still some attempts by the remnant forces of the slave system to stage a comeback, though they were unsuccessful.<sup>6</sup>

Further, the very nature of socialism as a transition between capitalism and communism makes a correct understanding of the dialectic between base and superstructure even more essential than it is for understanding capitalism or earlier exploiting systems. Because while capitalist relations developed within feudal society, feudal relations within slave society, etc. and each of these exploiting classes only came to power in the superstructure after building up their economic base, socialism cannot develop in the same way out of capitalism. And unlike capitalism and previous exploiting systems, socialism aims to make an unprecedented transformation of society, eliminating all exploitation and its superstructure, to make what Marx and Engels termed a "radical rupture" with all traditional property relations and traditional ideas.

It is true that under capitalism the socialization of production

creates the basis for transforming private appropriation into social appropriation, but this transformation itself cannot take place before the proletariat seizes state power. Although overall under socialism the economic base continues to determine the nature of the superstructure, the proletariat must consciously carry out the revolutionization of the economic base, the transformation of the relations of production, by exercising its state power and consciously applying its ideological and political line—in other words through the active, initiating role of the superstructure.

Citing Marx, who compared socialist revolution to childbirth, Aurthur argues that "Once a baby is born it cannot be stuffed back into the womb. Once socialist society is born out of the womb of the old capitalist society, it cannot be rejoined to its mother."<sup>8</sup> Let's take a look at exactly what Marx did say about this birth. He said that

"What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges."<sup>9</sup>

In other words, Marx was not emphasizing the *separation* of socialism from capitalism but the *connections* which still join the two and the *fragility* of the socialist infant. Lenin made much the same point using a different metaphor from the other end of the life cycle:

"No, the working class is not separated by a Chinese Wall from the old bourgeois society. And when a revolution takes place, it does not happen as in the case of the death of an individual, when the deceased is simply removed. When the old society perishes, its corpse cannot be nailed up in a coffin and lowered into the grave. It disintegrates in our midst; the corpse rots and infects us."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the decisive and overwhelmingly principal task of the socialist stage, of the entire historical era of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the very purpose of that dictatorship, is to eradicate the birthmarks inherited from the old society, to transform all of society so that, as Marx himself put it, mankind may come to "the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all

the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations."<sup>11</sup> (emphasis in original) This is sharply opposed to all those revisionists who argue that the historic task of the socialist period is to develop or modernize the productive forces.

To abolish all class distinctions it is necessary to abolish the production relations which give rise to them. These include three aspects, namely the forms of the ownership of the means of production, the position and mutual relations of people in production, and the distribution of the products of production. Of these three, ownership of the means of production is of decisive importance, and the key step for the proletariat in consolidating its dictatorship is to seize the means of production and place them under the ownership and control of the workers' state. But the other two aspects are also important. They react upon the system of ownership and, under certain conditions, can play the decisive role.

If the workers' state owns the means of production, but factories and enterprises are run in such a way that control is concentrated in the hands of a few leading cadres carrying out a revisionist line, if the differences between mental and manual labor, for instance, are consolidated and widened under the cover of "each keeping to his post" instead of being narrowed, then the socialist system of ownership can become a hollow shell. Similarly, while inequalities in distribution are unavoidable under socialism reflecting the fact that distribution must be mainly according to work and not need, if it is not recognized that such distribution is, after all, a defect and that such inequalities must be restricted, then they will in turn affect the system of ownership and lay the basis for strengthening and not abolishing class distinctions. The proletariat cannot rest with transforming the forms of ownership but must also transform and eventually abolish all unequal relations as regards people's position and mutual relations in the course of production as well as all unequal relations with respect to distribution. In short, bourgeois right in all three aspects of production relations must be continuously restricted to the degree possible at each point, in accordance with the material and ideological conditions, and must eventually be eliminated altogether. To do otherwise is to strengthen the basis for capitalist restoration.

This is what it means to revolutionize the base as a crucial part of continuing the socialist revolution to the development of communism, completely classless society. And at the same time it is necessary in conjunction with this to continue the revolution in the superstructure as well. Economic relations, relations of production, while in the long run the determining and decisive relations, are not the only social relations into which people enter. There are political, ideological and cultural relations as well. These aspects of

the superstructure react upon the base and they too may, under certain conditions, become decisive. Again, as Marx and Engels declared, "The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."<sup>12</sup>

RP7 described the importance of revolution in the superstructure and against all the ideas that arise from and serve capitalism. It pointed out:

"Old bourgeois ideas don't instantly vanish under socialism. . . . Bourgeois ideology remains a powerful weapon for capitalist restoration in a socialist society and must be fought by mass action and education every step of the way. . . ."

"The main struggle against bourgeois ideology takes place in *concrete* struggles to replace these old ideas and methods with proletarian ideology (which is based on principles of cooperation, equality and hatred of exploitation and reliance on the masses of people to organize production and society in general on the basis of scientific understanding of how society develops) and new methods in all the institutions of society.

Applying this to the Soviet Union, RP7 noted that

"Socialism in the USSR, the first socialist state, had to break totally new ground, and all the tried and established methods of getting things done were inherited from the bourgeoisie. To the degree that they went unchallenged and unchanged, they slowly but surely weakened the proletarian character of the state and the socialist nature of the economic base. And this created the subjective conditions for a more or less peaceful restoration of capitalism."<sup>13</sup>

Now Aurthur may agree with Kautsky, Khrushchev, Liu Shao-chi and other more recent advocates of revisionist theses on socialism. He may say with them that all this can be accomplished without the sharpest class struggle over an extended period of time, indeed, over an entire historical era. But Lenin, for one, did not. He argued the opposite:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat is a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the

new class against a *more powerful* enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased *tenfold* by its overthrow (even if only in one country), and whose power lies not only in the strength of international capital, in the strength and durability of the international connections of the bourgeoisie, but also in the *force of habit*, in the strength of *small production*. For, unfortunately, small production is still very, very widespread in the world, and small production *engenders* capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale. For all these reasons the dictatorship of the proletariat is essential, and victory over the bourgeoisie is impossible without a long, stubborn and desperate war of life and death, a war demanding perseverance, discipline, firmness, indomitableness and unity of will."<sup>14</sup>

Clearly Lenin links the continuing class struggle to the continual re-emergence of bourgeois production relations under socialism. Further, in fact, the bourgeois aspects retained even in socialist production relations provide the basis for these socialist relations to be transformed back to capitalist ones. And, in general, the remnants of capitalism provide the basis not only for the continuing struggle of the old bourgeoisie against proletarian state power but, more important, the development of a new bourgeoisie. This new bourgeoisie arises from several sources. Lenin pointed to small production (a major factor in countries like Russia and China) as an important one. Technocrats, managers, the intelligentsia and the state bureaucracy are another source. This was stressed by Lenin in many of his writings and speeches, particularly during the NEP period.

But the most important source of the new bourgeoisie is the Communist Party itself. This pathbreaking discovery was elaborated most thoroughly by Mao Tsetung and those who followed his leadership in China on the basis of summing up the Soviet experience and the experience of the class struggle in China itself. As Mao put it shortly before his death, "You are making the socialist revolution, and yet don't know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party."

Under capitalism the class struggle is *reflected* in the two-line struggle in the Party. But under socialism, Mao and his supporters argued, this struggle is actually *concentrated* in the Party since the most important Party leaders objectively occupy positions which can quite readily be transformed into those of a class antagonistic to the proletariat. The majority of managers, planners

and leading state and Party bureaucrats are leading Communists. This is why Mao stressed that "if people like Lin Piao come to power, it will be quite easy for them to rig up the capitalist system."

Socialism is a transitional system where the rising communist relations must, through long and protracted struggle over an entire historical era, replace the declining capitalist relations. Only the correct, proletarian ideological and political line of the Communist Party, and its mobilization on this basis of the masses of people, can prevent the majority of Party leaders from degenerating, and the minority which do anyway from seizing power. Mao, of course, stressed that as long as the proletariat wields supreme power and a revisionist line is not in command overall, the capitalist-roaders (those in authority who do degenerate and on the basis of adopting a bourgeois class stand and a revisionist political line attempt to turn their positions into those of capitalists) will be few in number. But Mao did not intend this to mean that the proletariat should be any less vigilant; the revisionists after all can command a significant social base. For Mao, prevention of a revisionist coup through continually advancing the revolution and at each stage striking at the soil which gives rise to the bourgeoisie—this is the cardinal question for communists during the entire socialist period.

For Aurthur, of course, all this is just idealist nonsense. For him "once the new mode of production is established, it marks the end of the old antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie because there is no more bourgeoisie in the sense of an owning, exploiting class."<sup>15</sup> And as for the new bourgeoisie, he contends this whole concept makes "classes and modes of production become reflections of mental categories, not material relations among people."<sup>16</sup>

This was not Lenin's view. Even though he did not and could not (because of the then very limited experience of building socialism) develop the kind of understanding of class struggle under socialism that Mao did, Lenin, in true "idealist" fashion, declared quite forcefully that:

"On the ground cleared of one bourgeois generation, new generations continually appear in history, as long as the ground gives rise to them, and it does give rise to any number of bourgeois. As for those who look at the victory over the capitalists in the way that the petty proprietors look at it—'they grabbed, let me have a go too'—indeed, every one of them is the source of a new generation of bourgeois."<sup>17</sup>

Here Lenin, like Mao, seemingly makes class origin a reflection of "mental categories." But Lenin's and Mao's view is entirely correct and thoroughly materialist because the basis is there for people with such a line to put their views into practice. *Political and ideological line are decisive in the class struggle under socialism.* This is not idealism but an expression of the contradictory nature of socialist society. As Lenin put it, "politics is a concentrated expression of economics."<sup>18</sup> Aurthur explicitly rejects this scientific approach since to him it equates "what is capitalist or socialist with 'line' or ideology. The 'line' of this or that department or unit will determine 'the nature of ownership of it.'" He asks: "Under such circumstances, how can one call a country socialist at all? Rather it reduces itself to a giant checkerboard of 'units' which are now capitalist, now socialist, depending on which 'line' the management carries out."<sup>19</sup> But in a certain sense it is precisely such a "checkerboard" which does exist. For given the transitional nature of the socialist mode of production there is a basis in every unit for leadership to restore certain bourgeois production relations by implementing a revisionist line. This does not deny that socialism is a coherent economic system which marks a decisive break with the capitalist mode of production. But the internal contradictions of socialism, which mark it as necessarily only a transition to the ultimate goal of communist society, mean that it will have such a "checkerboard" character and that throughout all spheres of society there will be a constant struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie over which class is in command there.

Even though a revisionist line may lead in certain factories, perhaps even in the majority, if the Communist Party leadership sticks to the proletarian line and mobilizes the masses in struggle against the revisionists, the socialist system will continue to develop and advance—but only, of course, through defeating the revisionist line and toppling from power those who stubbornly persist in fighting for this line. This is why, in 1969, in speaking of the situation that existed before the start of the Cultural Revolution, Mao stressed that "According to my own observation I would say that, not in all factories, nor in an overwhelming majority of factories, but in quite a large majority of cases the leadership is not in the hands of true Marxists, nor yet in the hands of the masses of the workers."<sup>20</sup> Yet Mao was not arguing that China was no longer a socialist country. He was pointing out that despite the great changes in the situation he described above, through the Cultural Revolution, still to continue the revolution was a real struggle, "the revolution has not been completed."<sup>21</sup>

Of course it is not just that the Communist Party is hierarchically structured or that a few bad eggs sneak in. There is a close

dialectical connection between leading capitalist-roaders and their social base among other sectors of the new and old bourgeoisie. Besides the old exploiters, the intelligentsia, technocrats, lower level enterprise managers and administrators in socialist society provide a social base for capitalist restoration. The capitalist-roaders in the Party leadership are their commanders but must also reward sections of this base with added privilege and power.

This can be seen in the transformation of the Soviet Party Central Committee under Khrushchev. Under Stalin there arose a certain tendency to select Central Committee members and other political leaders on the basis of technical expertise, organizational "efficiency" or the achievement of "practical results" in production instead of according to grasp of and ability to apply and develop a proletarian political line. This was a serious counter-current to an overall correct policy of putting politics in command. Under Khrushchev, however, this incorrect tendency became the general rule. Proletarian fighters were expelled from the Central Committee and political middle forces swamped by a rapid expansion of that body's membership. New capitalist blood joined the ranks of the leaders. From the 19th Congress of the CPSU in 1952 to the 22nd Congress in 1961 there was a drastic change in the composition of the Central Committee. This period saw an influx of "practical men": educated technocrats and managers replaced the supposed "ideological hacks" of the Stalin era.

In 1952, 24.6% of the Central Committee consisted of members who had been recruited into Party leadership from leading posts in administrative, managerial or technical affairs relatively late in their "careers." By 1961, however, this proportion had more than doubled to 50.3%.<sup>22</sup> In the Politbureau the change was more drastic. Where in 1951 only two of eleven Politbureau members had some higher technical education, by 1971 ten of fifteen possessed diplomas in one or another kind of technology.<sup>23</sup> To make success in raising production quotas or prestige among members of the scientific community a basis for promotions into *political* leadership is a policy characteristic of revisionism and capitalist restoration.

Aurthur opposes placing "a large share of the responsibility for capitalist restoration on the intelligentsia or even the more advanced strata of the working class under socialism."<sup>24</sup> In socialist society, he claims, such people exist in harmony with the masses of workers and there is not antagonism between them.

Now surely these strata, especially the intelligentsia, do not deserve "a large share of the blame"; this must fall on the top revisionists in the Party leadership. But this must not justify the failure to recognize how these strata, especially the more privileged sectors of the intelligentsia, do provide a crucial social base for

restoration. As previously discussed, such people exist in a different relation to production and a different position in society than do the workers and peasants. Differences between mental and manual labor and in distribution of wealth provide the basis for the perpetuation and development of potentially antagonistic class distinctions between them and the masses of working people.

To support his view Aurthur digs up an interesting quote from Stalin. Arguing against those who stressed the danger of the bourgeoisification of educated workers who increasingly occupied positions formerly held by bourgeois intellectuals, Stalin declared:

"These people, it appears, assert that workers and peasants who until recently were working in Stakhanovite fashion in the factories and collective farms, and who were then sent to the universities to be educated, therefore ceased to be real people and became second-rate people. So we are to conclude that education is a pernicious and dangerous thing. We want all our workers and peasants to be cultured and educated, and we shall achieve this in time. But in the opinion of these queer comrades, this purpose harbors a grave danger; for after the workers and peasants become cultured and educated they may face the danger of being classified as second-rate people."<sup>25</sup>

At the time it was certainly correct to recruit a new working class intelligentsia; this was a tremendous advance which strengthened the proletarian dictatorship. But still it must be said that, looking back on the whole Soviet experience and the history of socialism in general, it was an error, even a serious one, on Stalin's part to ignore the fact that the basis for antagonistic class distinctions exists in the difference between mental and manual labor and in the relative privilege in distribution and social position enjoyed by the intelligentsia regardless of the class origin of individual members of this group. Education is a powerful weapon of liberation for the proletariat, and if a correct line is in command the relations between workers and intellectuals in socialist society will overall be characterized by comradely cooperation. But if a proletarian line does not lead, education will be bourgeois education, distinctions between mental and manual labor will be expanded not narrowed and all this will serve only to perpetuate privileges and class division.

It is not that Communists wish to deny the masses an education. But education cannot stand above the ideological and political line. As Mao put it: "Some whose technical and cultural level is

high are nonetheless neither diligent nor enthusiastic: others whose level is lower are quite diligent and enthusiastic. The reason lies in the lower political consciousness of the former, the higher political consciousness of the latter."<sup>26</sup>

Just as revisionism can arise regardless of the class origin of the revisionist (Khrushchev himself was, after all, a coal miner's son), it is also not a matter of intent. And this is Aurthur's final argument. He is forced to accept the obvious fact that there is, at the least, a privileged elite in the USSR. But, he argues, this is precisely why this group would never restore capitalism. His argument would be funny, if it wasn't so backward:

"But why would a Brezhnev or even a Khrushchov want to restore capitalism? They have arisen under socialism, and the privileges they have gained were gained under, and in a certain sense because of socialism. The elite *like* socialism because it means that they can have their privileges *and* a working class whose standard of living is constantly rising, who are not likely to go on strike, riot, or overthrow the government—as long, that is, as the leadership guarantees their well-being. Brezhnev and Company have no desire to restore capitalism; instead they want, and have been able, to skim the cream off socialism, to have their cake and eat it too."<sup>27</sup>

Truly an amazing statement, is it not? Aurthur, who accuses us "restorationists" of idealism and contempt for the working class, puts more of both in this one statement than could ever be found in all the publications attacking Soviet social-imperialism put out by Marxist-Leninists worldwide. Imagine, the Soviet workers are content to live under the boot of these "cream-skimmers" so long as the benevolent despots guarantee their "well-being." And as for Khrushchev or Brezhnev what need have they for capitalism? As if it was ever a matter of personal desires in the first place! One might ask this CLP clown just who is the real idealist here?

Moreover, the vulgar economism behind this whole statement must be noted. According to Aurthur the working class will always be satisfied, will always accept whatever oppression the rulers dish out, so long as the economy is booming and wages are going up. Never mind the historic mission of the working class to liberate itself and all mankind from the exploitation and oppression of class society. Never mind the need to continue the revolution to the elimination of all class distinctions. Behind his openly contemptuous assault on the Soviet workers lies Aurthur's version

of the revisionist "theory of the productive forces" which declares that the purpose of socialism is only to develop the productive forces and not to continuously revolutionize the relations of production and the superstructure and on this basis expand production and move forward to classless society, communism.

Aurthur does not recognize socialism as a society defined by the relationship between classes—and principally between the ruling proletariat and the bourgeoisie over which the proletariat exercises dictatorship. He refuses to accept the fact that this society will be moved one way or the other—forward to communism *or* backward to capitalism—and that the direction of this motion will be determined by the development of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Instead, in essence, he identifies socialism only with state ownership and views this not as a social relationship but as a thing—a static absolute without internal contradiction and motion.

#### PROFIT IN COMMAND OF THE ECONOMY

The intentions of any specific revisionist are not at all the decisive thing with regard to the restoration of capitalism. By championing a bourgeois line even the most dedicated of proletarian revolutionaries, who have devoted their lives to upholding the banner of communism, may degenerate into capitalist roaders and, indeed, if this happens the very prestige such people have accumulated makes them even more dangerous. Economic laws and the necessity posed by their operation *force* the revisionists to ultimately restore the capitalist system. This was stressed in *RP7*, which is worth quoting at some length on the subject:

"It is impossible for some classless group of 'bureaucrats' to rule society in the name of the proletariat, because in order to maintain such rule these 'bureaucrats' must organize the production and distribution of goods and services. If bureaucratic methods of doing this prevail and come to *politically characterize* the planning process under socialism; and if a group of bureaucrats, divorced from and not relying upon the masses, makes the decisions on how to carry out this process; then inevitably this will be done along capitalist lines.

"In the final analysis, the revisionists can only fall back on the law of value as the 'lever' which organizes production. They must reduce the workers to propertyless proletarians, competing in the sale of their single commodity—their labor pow-

er—to live. They must appeal to the narrow self-interest of the worker in this competition, backing this up with the power of the state, as a force standing above and oppressing the workers, a weapon in the hands of the owners of the means of production. They must do this because they must find some way to organize production which they cannot do consciously in a planned way by themselves. *They have no choice but to become a new bourgeoisie. . .*

"Once this road is taken, the planned relationship between various sectors of the economy, according to the socialist principle of subordinating profitability—at the enterprise level, and in society generally—to the objective of all-round and constantly rising development must also come under the regulation of the law of value. And this means that profit must be put in command."<sup>28</sup>

Which brings us to the second argument raised by the apologists: their contention that the Soviet economy has not been reorganized along capitalist lines and that the profit motive is not in command.

In his review, Al Szymanski is careful to differentiate *RP7* from the work of Martin Nicolaus, stating that "The Nicolaus work thus focuses almost exclusively on economic relations (narrowly defined). *Red Papers 7*, on the other hand, rejects this way of posing the problem. . . ." Szymanski applauds *RP7* for centering "instead on the question of 'who owns the state,'" and for maintaining that "the *plan* rather than markets is the decisive economic question." But he goes on to claim that "while the main thrust of the RCP work is to show that the working class does not control the state, virtually all the points made by Nicolaus about the operation of capitalist economic principles are also made (in a sort of overkill argument)—only later to be called irrelevant. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

Now wait just a minute, Professor Szymanski. This is not the case at all. The argument presented in much detail, with extensive citation and analysis of works by Soviet economists, in Chapter III of *RP7* does not by any means mirror Nicolaus' shoddy presentation; in fact much of it was consciously aimed at refuting precisely the kind of thinking Nicolaus later raised to an opportunist principle (see especially the section "Will the Real Bourgeoisie Please Stand Up?" on pages 49-52). Our differences with Martin Nicolaus have been outlined in full in an article in *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 1 and the reader is encouraged to refer to this for clarification. But while it is unnecessary to repeat the whole argument here, a brief summary of just what it is that does make the Soviet

economy function according to the laws of the capitalist system will be useful.

The response to Nicolaus defended *RP7*'s definition of socialism. This definition reads:

"We can say that *socialism exists where the working class actually holds state power, where the sphere of operation of the law of value is being reduced to the maximum degree permitted by economic and political realities, where the initiative of the working class in developing new relations of production including a new division of labor is actively fostered by Party and state, and where the revolutionary transformation of all aspects of society is vigorously carried out under the leadership of the working class and its Communist Party.*" (emphasis in original)<sup>30</sup>

This definition correctly puts stress on the political leadership of the proletariat and not on any particular stage in the development of socialist production relations, including state ownership of the means of production, nor on planning.

While it was entirely correct to defend this definition against Nicolaus' criticism and his crude attempt to equate socialism with "planning" and capitalism with the "free market," it must still be recognized that the definition is actually more a description of what has come to be known as "the socialist road." The question of whether to remain on the socialist road or not is, of course, the decisive one. If leadership is seized by capitalist roaders representing a new bourgeois class who mobilize the Party to implement a revisionist line, then a socialist country will abandon the socialist road for the capitalist one and capitalist restoration is inevitable. In a certain sense it can be said that such emphasis follows the lead of Lenin who declared that use of "the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognized as a socialist order."<sup>31</sup>

However, though keeping to the socialist road is central and decisive, there are also actual socialist relations of production which define socialism as a particular transitional system standing between capitalism, the highest stage of commodity production, and communism, classless society based on the advance beyond commodity categories. Capitalist production relations are characterized by exploitation and inequality. Communist production relations have abolished both exploitation and inequality. Socialist relations are no longer exploitative but they still contain



elements of inequality; hence, their contradictory quality. Under socialism both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie attempt to transform these relations in directions opposite to each other. The proletariat tries to restrict and eventually eliminate the vestiges and remnants of inequality that persist under socialism in order to advance the struggle toward communism. The bourgeoisie, however, will continually try to seize upon the bourgeois aspects of these relations in order to restore capitalism.

This latter is what has been going on in a thorough way in the Soviet Union since 1956, under the conditions where the bourgeoisie has seized power in society from the proletariat. And though, in essence, and for all practical purposes, the process of restoring a capitalist economic base was completed with the economic reforms of 1965, it is in many respects continuing against important residues of the formerly socialist base and superstructure.

In short, to build socialism and communism the proletariat must seize state power in order to carry the *revolution* into the economic base while, at the same time, continuing to deepen the revolution in the superstructure. To restore capitalism, the revisionist new bourgeoisie must also seize state power and then carry the *counter-revolution* into the economic base. On the basis of this counter-revolutionary transformation the superstructure will also be further bourgeoisified.

While the key overall counter-revolutionary step took place 10 years earlier with the revisionist seizure of power in the superstructure, the key "moment" in the thoroughgoing counter-revolutionary transformation of the economic base as it unfolded in the specific conditions of the Soviet Union was the restoration of the profit motive as the main motivational force in the economy. According to Szymanski the crux of the 1965 reforms was not this but instead "simply a reduction in the number of criteria used by the central ministries to evaluate enterprise performance..."<sup>32</sup> But a writer on whom Szymanski relies at a number of points for support, the prominent academic defender of the "New System" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Jozef Wilczynski, makes clear in his work *The Economics of Socialism* that this is hardly the case. According to him, "profit was officially accepted in the USSR in 1965 as the main criterion of enterprise performance... before the reforms it was treated merely as an accounting device to ensure that enterprises endeavored to cover their costs out of their own resources where possible, and to hand over the surplus to the State."<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, Wilczynski reveals that it is not just the amount of profit that is taken into account but the *rate of profit* as well (called "rentability" according to Soviet economic newspeak and reflec-

ting the fact that most profit must be turned over to the central state monopoly capitalists as if it were "rent"). Wilczynski presents the following formula for computation of the profit rate:<sup>34</sup>

$$R = \frac{Q(P-C)}{F+V} 100$$

- where R = rentability, or rate of profit  
 Q = quantity of output actually sold by the enterprise  
 P = price at which the output delivered is sold  
 C = average prime cost  
 F = average annual value of fixed assets  
 V = average annual value of variable (circulating) assets

This is really not much different from how capitalists compute the rate of profit, as a rate of return on investment. And, indeed, his description of the significance of the profit criterion under "socialism" is also similar to descriptions of the role of profit under capitalism offered by bourgeois economic theorists:

"The significance and success of the profit criterion consist mainly in the fact that a direct link has been established between profit and incentive payments, so that it is in the interest of the enterprise personnel—and at the same time society—to strive to maximize enterprise profits. But profit can achieve more than merely a better utilization of resources at the operational level. Trends in the levels of profitability of different branches of the economy provide guidance to central planners in their endeavor to optimize the allocation of resources on the macrosocial scale. Thus profit provides that unique bond of union between micro and macroeconomic interest—the missing link from which Socialist economies had traditionally suffered."<sup>35</sup>

Adam Smith, of course, referred to this "missing link" as the "invisible hand."

Wilczynski does try to differentiate what he calls "socialist profit" from profit under capitalism, enumerating seven "significant" differences between the two. But are these really so "significant"? Let's see.

Wilczynski says that under socialism:<sup>36</sup>



(1) "Profit is not an objective but a means." But this is true under capitalism too—it is a means of capital accumulation. And anyway, how is one to differentiate the means from the end here? After all, don't the capitalists always claim that profit is merely the most efficient measure of productivity and the effectiveness of investment?

(2) "Profits cannot be increased by restricting production." Under certain monopoly conditions the capitalists can sometimes make short-term windfalls by restricting production, artificially driving up prices, and then selling dear what has been produced cheap. But this is by no means the essence or normal functioning of capitalist production. Indeed, Marx argued that to point to such instances as the source of capitalist profit places exploitation in the sphere of distribution and not production. Marxists argue—against all sorts of bourgeois economic theories—that capitalist profit arises from production, as surplus value. Thus, for the capitalist a greater mass of profit can only come from either greater production or a higher rate of exploitation, and usually some combination of both. Restricting production to raise profits is an exceptional practice under capitalism stemming from the development of certain monopoly situations. It hardly pertains to the essence of capitalist profit, including in the imperialist stage. And besides, such incidences of restricting production to increase profit do occur, as the exception, in the Soviet Union too. The Soviet press has at times run reports of managers who find it more "profitable" not to overfulfill the plan.<sup>37</sup>

(3) "Profits are not owned by private persons." So what? Just look at the nationalized steel industry in western Europe—is it not capitalist? Moreover, the truth of this contention is itself highly questionable since the Soviet rulers lead quite a privileged life (as we shall see) and it is exclusively they who have control over how profit is to be reinvested (under the present system it is to make more profit), which is what happens to the lion's share of profit under capitalism in all its forms.

(4) "Profits is only one of several driving forces behind Socialist production. Planning must still be regarded as the main driving force." But the question is what guides planning, profit or the revolutionary interests of the proletariat?

(5) "Profit is not necessarily an objective measure of efficiency." On this we agree. It is one of the criticisms which has been offered of the profit system for generations—even before Marx. What's the point?

(6) "Differences in the profit rate do not necessarily determine the distribution of investment." In some cases this is true in the USSR. After all in the U.S. too the capitalists are forced to invest in some very unprofitable things to keep their system running.

Witness Amtrak, the postal service, some corporate research and development projects, etc. But in the Soviet Union profitability is still the principal and dominant determinant. Wilczynski argues this himself—remember the "missing link?"

And (7) "Flows of capital to foreign countries are not determined by profit." This may be true in many cases in the short-run, as it is for much U.S. and West European investment, but don't count on it holding up after time. More on this subject later.

Finally, in defense of "socialist profit" Wilczynski quotes the famed revisionist economist who more than anyone else came to symbolize the principle of "profit in command" under socialism, Yvesei Liberman. And not surprisingly (if still ironically), Liberman's words have a familiar sound to them, reminiscent of our "Stalinist" friend, Mr. Aurthur: "Rivers do not flow backward," Liberman assures us. "And if, at high water, rivers make turns, they are simply cutting better and shorter channels for themselves. They are not looking for a way to go back."<sup>38</sup> While this may be true of rivers, it can hardly be said to also be true of revisionists.

The difference between *RP7* and Martin Nicolaus was that *RP7* saw adoption of the profit motive as the key element in the "reforms," but also as something distinct from the much-trumpeted abandonment of "planning" in favor of the "market." The aspect of the reforms' restoring autonomy to individual enterprises did not, *RP7* argued, return the Soviet economy to the stage of competitive capitalism. Thus, its much ballyhooed "failure" is on this score beside the point.

*RP7* argued that after the reform the plan came to be guided, not by politics, by the ever-increasing mastery of the proletariat led by its Party and achieved through continuing class struggle, over the spontaneous pull of the economic laws of commodity production which continue to function but are restricted under socialism. Instead it was guided by subordination of the plan to the demands of these laws themselves, especially the law of value, the fundamental law of commodity production, and by abandonment of their restriction and an exaltation of their role. In other words, "plan" and "market" were, in a sense, merged, with the "market" thus regaining dominance over the plan but *inside* the planning process itself and not independent of it. This was reflective of the highly developed monopoly nature of the Soviet economy.

Indeed, this was evident in the price reform which necessarily followed introduction of the profit motive. Under the profit system prices have to more closely reflect their determination by the law of value so that profitability in different industries and enterprises can be measured on a common basis. Thus before the Soviet wholesale price reform of 1967 the profitability of different in-

dustries ranged from -17% in coal mining to +30% in light industry with an average of +13%.<sup>39</sup> But after the price reform the range was narrowed to a low of +8% for coal mining to +16% in the iron and steel industry.<sup>40</sup> This is a reflection of the influence of commodity market *categories* on *planned production* under state monopoly capitalism.

Here it will be useful to digress somewhat and discuss various Soviet economic theories since it is often thought, and has recently been put forward, that criticism of Liberman's "market socialism" is by itself an adequate critique of revisionist economics. This view is closely akin to Nicolaus' theories. But it would be a serious error to limit revisionist economics to the theory of "market socialism."

"Market socialism" advocates free trade and competition among state-owned enterprises under the plan. It has been put into practice (but only partially, since the development of monopoly, including state monopoly, is inevitable under capitalism) only in Yugoslavia but has been advocated ever since the '30s when its theory was devised by the Polish socialist economist Oskar Lange. Today "market socialism" is associated in one form or another with such prominent revisionist economists as W. Brus in Poland, Ota Sik in Czechoslovakia before the invasion, Branko Horvat in Yugoslavia and, to some extent, A. Birman and Liberman in the USSR.<sup>41</sup>

But the other main trend of thought in revisionist economic "science," the theory of "optimal planning," which denies the free operation of market factors, also rests on the assumption that market exchange of equivalent values is the most "rational" means of allocating resources and goods. The "optimal planners" seek to plan out the workings of market forces in advance through employment of mathematical planometrics, input-output techniques and the use of computers. The ideas of this school of thought have much in common with the thinking of the U.S. bourgeois advocate of capitalist planning Wasily Leontief. Its primary Soviet advocates have been the Nobel prize winner L.V. Kantorovich, V.S. Nemchinov, V.V. Novozhilov and N. Fedorenko.<sup>42</sup> This is pretty much the group identified in *RP7* as the "prices of production" school, although *RP7* fails to give Kantorovich and his planometrics the deserving revisionist credit he received in Stockholm. They have enjoyed increasing influence in Soviet planning in recent years.

Both these theories are based on the erroneous premise that, protected from the obstruction of monopoly, the capitalist economy can operate smoothly according to the law of value. It is not this law, these theories fundamentally argue, which leads to the irrationality, crisis and exploitation of the capitalist system but the

obstruction of its smooth operation by personal greed and other "excesses" stemming from individual appropriation and leading to monopoly. The function of socialism becomes to make Adam Smith's "invisible hand" really work. This is not an application of the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx but is based upon assumptions taken from David Ricardo, the 19th century bourgeois economist criticized by Marx.

Nearly all significant Soviet economists reflect, in one way or another, the ideas of one of these two revisionist schools—"market socialism" and "optimal planning"—much as in the U.S. economists divide into monetarists, those who believe that control of the money supply is the best way to regulate the economy, and Keynesians, those who believe government spending and budgetary policy may be employed to "fine-tune" the economy. But, as in the U.S., the system does not and cannot fully match up with any of these theoretical models. This is because the assumption is incorrect that capitalist crisis, etc. is not intimately tied into the very nature of the laws of the commodity system, but is a product of "interference" with such laws. As Marx and Lenin both stressed, speaking of pre-socialist society, monopoly and competition are two sides of the same coin and must coexist under commodity production. This is a unity of opposites expressed in the contradiction plan-market. Thus it is no wonder that nearly all revisionist economists, no matter what school they espouse, accept the thesis that "There is no real justification for treating plan and market under Socialism as mutually exclusive."<sup>43</sup> In a sense they are correct; both aspects of this contradiction must exist so long as the commodity system operates whether it takes on a "free market" form or not. As in any contradiction the two aspects interpenetrate, there is a "market" in any plan and "planning" in the market. But the revisionists raise the interpenetration of the two aspects of this contradiction exactly to disguise its contradictoriness, just as Nicolaus undialectically ignores the interpenetration. As Mao put it in his criticism of a Soviet economics text:

"Spontaneity and *laissez faire* are incompatible with public ownership of the means of production.' It should not be thought, however, that spontaneity and *laissez faire* do not exist in a socialist society."<sup>44</sup>

For Marxist-Leninists this contradiction must be dialectically resolved through continued revolutionary struggle to restrict the sphere of operation of the law of value and finally eliminate it. Revisionism, on the other hand, "accepts" this contradiction.

This is why Nicolaus is wrong to reduce the whole question to one of plan = socialism, market = capitalism, but also why

Szymanski is wrong to caricature *RP7* as declaring the whole question of capitalist economic laws irrelevant, *reducing* the matter to a simple question of "who owns the state" instead of *basing* the analysis on this key question and proceeding from there.

According to Szymanski, the 1965 reforms were "rescinded" anyway in 1971 and 1973, and he credits this unique discovery to the authors of *RP7*.<sup>45</sup> Maybe the professor can't read, but nowhere does *RP7* make any such claim, mainly because such a startling series of events never took place outside Szymanski's imagination. What did occur in 1973 was the institution of the Production Association or "trust" as a new form of organization in the economy. The Production Association combines, in various forms, numerous enterprises in much the same way as a conglomerate does in the U.S.

The decree establishing the Production Associations was issued while *RP7* was in preparation and its final impact was not clear when the book was published. But it is now apparent that these Associations have become an important phenomenon in the Soviet economy; indeed, they increasingly represent the basic unit of state monopoly capitalism. By the beginning of 1976 there were some 2,300 Production Associations operating in the Soviet Union accounting for some 24% of industrial production.<sup>46</sup> While the individual enterprise has lost most of the semblance of autonomy it gained under the 1965 reform, these larger "trusts" are another matter. The Production Associations are formidable concentrations of capital and represent the development of specific competing capitals within the state capitalist system.

Szymanski is apparently not aware of the work of the French expert on the Soviet economy, Marie Lavigne, who has compared the Soviet "trusts" to Western monopolies and in a very interesting study has shown how their role in the economy is increasingly to modify the workings of market laws (within and without the plan) in a way similar to monopoly corporations in traditional capitalist economies.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, at least one prominent Soviet economist has applauded the advent of the Association for, among other things, its ability to engage in self-financing (and thus self-expansion of value, i.e., the ability to behave as an independent capital within the overall plan.) The logic of this development leads to two possible results. One is the transformation of the state economic ministries into large-scale enterprises themselves similar to the Associations; the other is the elimination of these ministries, which under socialism in the USSR were the heart of proletarian planned economy, and their replacement by the Production Associations.<sup>48</sup> Another Soviet economist has picked up on this and suggests that the economies of the Soviet bloc must limit the responsibility of the state ministries and reduce their number.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, what has happened as a result of the development of the Production Associations on the basis of the restoration of profit is not just an end to the "free market" pipe dreams of the enterprise managers. No, what has happened is that, on the one hand, there is increasing concentration and centralization of state monopoly capital coupled, on the other hand, with the continuing centrifugal pull of capitalist anarchy and competition. In other words, what was predicted in *RP7* is coming to pass:

"Even where a capitalist 'plan' for development exists, including a state 'plan' designed to ensure the profitability of key monopolized industries, the laws of commodity production/exchange, including especially the law of value—the blind force of the market—will still remain dominant. This means that competition between various capitalists, controlling different sectors of the economy and different 'pieces' of the surplus will inevitably develop too...

"The creation of the large-scale Production Associations reveals that this is developing rapidly in the Soviet Union. These Production Associations will inevitably compete with each other in pursuit of profit. An association centered around the production of steel, for example, will attempt to branch into coal mining. Soon the Production Associations will not only be set up according to industry but will—and to some degree, no doubt, they already do—come to represent competing groups of capitalists whose interests are quite varied; equivalent, say, to the Morgan or Rockefeller groups in the U.S. These competing groups will in turn fight it out for political influence and control in the Communist Party.

"It will be impossible for these competing capitalists to peacefully divide the wealth. They will try, but their eternal quest for ever-greater profit will always create new contradictions for them. It will always smash to smithereens whatever agreements they succeed in reaching among themselves. This is directly due to the fundamental contradiction of capitalism and imperialism everywhere—the contradiction between private appropriation and social production of wealth."<sup>50</sup>

Like Szymanski, Aurthur also minimizes the importance of the

reforms in a mirror-image of the Nicolaus idiocy. To him Khrushchev's early decentralizing efforts were simply a series of measures designed politically to "weaken the Molotov grouping,"<sup>51</sup> which, not coincidentally, was based in the central state ministries. The 1965 measures continued in this vein. Their purpose, he says, was to "raise productivity by giving local enterprise leadership more leeway in their use of resources, more incentive to conserve capital, rationalize their operations, etc." But, Aurthur contends, the reform failed because it came into conflict with the fundamental laws of socialism. "Objective laws of political economy," he argues, "cannot be changed, radically changed, abolished or negated by decrees, resolutions, maneuvers, schemes, 'economic levers,' bargaining, or the changing of a political 'line' in a factory, farm or mine."<sup>52</sup>

But, as seen earlier, it is precisely by seizing the superstructure in order to transform the base that the capitalist-roaders carry out the counter-revolutionary restoration process. To deny the possibility of decrees, etc. changing the economic laws—or really, changing their sphere of operation and in what way they operate (or do not operate)—is not only reflective of an undialectical view of the relationship between base and superstructure but it also denies that the proletariat can transform the capitalist base into a communist one by wielding its state power.

On the other hand, in the Soviet Union today the new capitalist economic relations come into contradiction with remnants of the former socialist superstructure. This is revealed most graphically in the discussion of the "rules of the game" initiated in the journal *Ekonomika i organizatsiia promyshlennogo proizvodstva* (Economics and the Organization of Industrial Production) in 1975. In the course of this debate a number of prominent Soviet managerial personnel and economic experts raised complaints about petty regulations and interference in management by state administrators and others. While this complaining mainly reflected the struggle of lower-level management against their state-monopoly superiors, the discussion also exposed how remnants of real socialist planning were very much seen as an obstacle to the more "efficient" (in the capitalist sense, i.e. "profitable") functioning of the present economy. As one participant in the discussion put it:

"Economic legislation as it exists in our country today is not fully in keeping with the goals of economic development. It is a vast systemless mass of legal norms issued at various times and under various conditions of our economic development. I agree with G.A. Kulagin that it is necessary not on-

ly to do away with certain outdated norms but also to implement a system of measures that will make economic legislation an effective tool of socialist economic development."<sup>53</sup>

Here we find "reform-minded" managers and experts, carrying out their revisionist economic tasks with the obvious support of prominent authorities, coming into direct conflict *not* with the socialist base, but with outdated and ineffective *laws*. And, Aurthur and his crew of reformist-dogmatists notwithstanding, Marxists have always seen laws as part of the superstructure.

While Aurthur recognizes the growing stagnation in the Soviet economy and the real problems which that economy faces but blames this on the Khrushchev-Brezhnev "policies" being out of step with the needs of the socialist base, Szymanski informs us that ever since the reform all has been well with the Soviet economy. He claims (with no statistical confirmation) that in the period 1965-73 the Soviet economy functioned more smoothly than before and that there has been no evidence of the kind of crisis characteristic of capitalism. Space is lacking here to go deeply into the nature of the developing crisis of the social-imperialist economy, or to discuss some of the empirically discernible effects of capitalist restoration. But it would be sensible to warn Dr. Szymanski: Don't speak too soon. Clearly the growth rate of the Soviet economy has been declining. Agriculture, a problem which the new Czars inherited from the socialist period, has only worsened. The problem of productivity is an extremely serious one. Indeed, another French economist has recently tried to show, in a very perceptive and pathbreaking (though not revolutionary) analysis, that the problems of the Soviet economy bear a striking resemblance to problems caused under capitalism by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Indeed, this observer identifies such a tendency developing in the Soviet Union since the 1950s as a chronic problem and points to this as the cause of a distinct and serious crisis, although his analysis is not thoroughly predicated on a Marxist analysis of capitalist crisis.<sup>54</sup>

Before concluding this section some comment is called for on one last important point raised by Aurthur (and less completely by Szymanski)—the question of whether labor power is a commodity in the Soviet Union. Now this is a good question, since capitalism is that stage of commodity production where labor power itself becomes a commodity. Aurthur adds that "the question of whether or not the worker sells his labor power as a commodity in the Soviet Union can be stated in another way. Does he get paid according to the market price of labor power. . ."<sup>55</sup> This is also a pretty good way to put it except that the "market price of labor

power" need not be determined on the open market. Labor power will be a commodity so long as it is "alienated" by the working class to the capitalist class in exchange for its equivalent value, i.e., the cost of the existence and reproduction of the worker.

Now if goods and services can be priced basically according to the dictates of the law of value without a free market as we have shown is the case in the Soviet Union (and is also sometimes the case in the older capitalist economies at least in some aspects—for example, airline fares in the U.S.) then so can labor power. As a writer put it in the pages of *Pravda* describing the implication of reforms in the wage system, "With the introduction of new wage rates, the pay categories of most workers are determined according to uniform wage-rates and skills manual; this ensures a uniform approach in evaluating the complexity of the labor of workers in all occupations represented in various enterprises and branches."<sup>56</sup>

A completely free and competitive labor market is not a precondition for the development of wage labor; the fundamental basis of wage labor is that the *working class* depends upon its ability to sell its labor power to an alien *capitalist class*. For example, under the Nazis German capitalism implemented draconian labor laws which virtually chained workers to their employers like slaves. In this manner the price of labor power (wages) was held down at or even below its value despite the virtual elimination (temporarily and on a war basis) of unemployment. And Hitler's Germany was most assuredly a capitalist society.

Indeed, the comparison with Nazi Germany is, as *RP7* indicated, most appropriate. For in the Soviet Union labor power is exchanged approximately at its value mainly through a complex process of wage determination through planning and this is secured mainly through non-economic pressures. While in doing this the Soviet capitalists are able to rely to some degree on their carefully maintained socialist cover, which they are willing to make significant concessions to preserve, they too can resort to open terror. Terror, of course, was openly used by the Soviet working class and its Party when it held state power. This was, however, directed—overwhelmingly and despite certain errors—against the counter-revolutionary enemies of the working class and socialism. The Soviet social-imperialist rulers today use open terror to suppress the masses, but they also revive and proclaim the words "dictatorship of the proletariat" where it is useful to cover their sanguinary suppression of the working class and people of the Soviet Union—and other countries. This is a trick that many revisionists have found to their advantage since the fall of Khrushchev.

Actually there is more labor fluidity, more of a labor "market," in the "socialist" Soviet Union today than there was in capitalist

Germany under Nazi rule. An appendix to *RP7* described the extent of this labor fluidity and the text noted the important role of the notorious "Shchekino experiment" as a model in intensifying the exploitation of the working class by driving down the value of labor-power through a combination of lay-offs and speed-up.

Aurthur's "proof" that labor power is not a commodity is twofold. First, he poses the truly ridiculous argument that labor power cannot be a commodity because wages and living standards are rising. How many times do we have to hear this kind of thing from the bourgeoisie?! Is one to suppose that because many workers in the U.S. now own color television sets and because according to the government personal income has risen since WW 2, the U.S. is not a capitalist country? That labor power here is not a commodity? How ridiculous! And in fact much of the Soviet wage increases have been designed specifically to bring wage levels into closer correspondence with the actual value of labor power as part of restructuring planning in such a way that profitability can effectively function as the key indicator of economic success. The *Pravda* writer cited above notes that

"The process of increasing minimum wages and basic wage and salary rates for personnel in middle pay categories that is currently being carried out in the branches of material production provides not only for wage increases but also for the *establishment of greater correspondence between wages and the quantity and quality of labor expended.*" (emphasis added)<sup>57</sup>

In other words, a general hike in wages can also mask a step backward into greater reliance on value categories. Under socialism it is necessary to pay "each according to his work." But, as noted previously, this is, after all, a bourgeois principle—that is, a principle based on bourgeois right, which masks actual inequality in formal equality—and is still linked to commodity categories. It must be consciously restricted. Linked closely to this is the question of material incentives to motivate labor. The Soviet revisionists rely on material incentives to increase productivity. But this elevates a necessity, the fact that payment according to value produced can only be restricted, to a positive principle. Mao sharply criticized the whole view of reliance on material incentive, arguing that it

"makes it seem as if the masses' creative activity has to be inspired by material interest... 'From each according to his ability, to each according to

his labor.' The first half of the slogan means that the very greatest effort must be expended in production. Why separate the two halves of the slogan and always speak onesidedly of material incentive? This kind of propaganda for material interest will make capitalism unbeatable!"<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps sensing the feebleness of his argument on rising wages Aurthur falls back on the line that "Without the reserve army of unemployed there cannot be competition for jobs and therefore no possibility of setting a price (wage) for a labor power that is not yet expended."<sup>59</sup> Here we might return again to the Nazi Germany comparison to note that unemployment there was virtually eliminated (this was also true of a number of capitalist countries, including the U.S. during WW 2), yet capitalism certainly flourished. Japan after WW 2 is another example. Between 1954 and 1967 the Japanese gross national product adjusted for inflation grew at an average rate of 10.1% and disposable income almost tripled. During this period of phenomenal capitalist development, the unemployment rate was by all accounts extremely low despite a continuing stream of new workers pouring into industry from the farms and fisheries.<sup>60</sup> No sooner was a reserve army created than it was gobbled up by the capitalist employers. Faced with what they perceived as a labor shortage which might limit the extent of rapid growth and embolden the working class to fight harder around economic demands, the Japanese capitalists followed a policy of "paternalism" aimed at virtually "guaranteeing" employment (in the short run) in exchange for gains in labor productivity and increased exploitation, a policy not dissimilar to that being followed by the Soviet capitalists today.

In other words, Aurthur is totally off base when he indicates that "unemployment is the fundamental condition of capitalist production."<sup>61</sup> Unemployment is an inevitable product of capitalist exploitation and *RP7* showed how the internal dynamic of Soviet capitalism must also lead to the development of this phenomenon on a mass scale (although it must be noted that the political constraints on the Soviet rulers to keep unemployment low and disguised are, due to the socialist past, much greater than those faced by the bourgeoisie in the U.S.).\*

And it must also be stated that there is already some unemployment in the Soviet Union, although it is masked and its extent is

\*Aurthur's arguments on the role of unemployment in the capitalist system are closely akin to the incorrect theories of Ray Boddy and Jim Crotty which were criticized in *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

presently limited. True, the Soviet press is filled with complaints of a labor shortage stemming in part from demographic factors but even more from the failure of Soviet agriculture to free adequate labor resources for industrial development. Yet at the same time there is serious and chronic under-utilization of labor which, in effect, disguises unemployment. Is a woman simply sitting at the doorway to a public building as a "gatekeeper" really much different from a welfare mother getting "relief" in the mail? Can this be called "employment" in any meaningful sense? Yet the phenomenon is often noted by visitors to the USSR. Moreover, Aurthur and Szymanski both ignore the problem of "youth unemployment" which ranged as high as 22% in Moscow *oblast* at one point in the early Khrushchev years.<sup>62</sup>

The recent debate among Soviet sociologists on the role of women is also revealing on this question. For these Soviet experts are trying to figure out how to involve women in production at skill levels profitable for the economy while, at the same time, getting them back into the home to work on improving the sagging Soviet birth rate. An increasingly heard proposal is the institution of part-time work.<sup>63</sup> But, of course, Soviet literature has for sixty years correctly attacked the expansion of such employment in capitalist countries as often disguising unemployment and as a means to drive down the living standard of the working class. (It might also be added that in this case it takes on the additional aspect of strengthening the subjugation of women to male domination by removing them from production.) Quite a bind these revisionists are in!

### THE SOVIET RULING CLASS

According to Al Szymanski, "While the RCP is correct in focusing on the question of which class has state power [rather than on the role of markets/plan], its authors are unable to demonstrate that there has developed in the Soviet Union a new class of state bureaucratic capitalists who live off the profits of exploited wage labor and control the state."<sup>64</sup>

Having severed the question of a new ruling class from the question of this class' relation to the means of production by dismissing most of *RP7*'s arguments on this score as Nicolaus-type "overkill", Szymanski must refute the existence of a bourgeois ruling class on bourgeois sociological grounds. Completely ignoring the Marxist method of class analysis (which is probably better for him, since Szymanski is a pitifully poor Marxist), he instead uses bourgeois categories to "prove" the non-existence of a new bourgeois class. He claims there is very little social inequality in the Soviet Union and those differences which do exist are "quanti-



tively and qualitatively less than in the West, *and for the most part are rapidly diminishing.*" (emphasis in original) He cites figures to show that the spread in wages between lowest and highest paid has declined in the past decade and points out that anyway "the highest paid people in the Soviet Union are not industrial managers or state and party bureaucrats, but prominent artists, writers, university administrators and professors and scientists."<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Szymanski contends, in one of the more laughable notions of recent years, that "there is broad and authentic participation of the people in decision-making and control bodies in the Soviet Union."<sup>66</sup>

Now to focus only on these two questions, inequality and political participation, especially in the way Szymanski does, avoids the heart of the matter—relationship to production. The bourgeoisie is not defined by its income superiority over other classes; to be rich is not the same as being a capitalist. One has only to recall the reams of bourgeois literature of the 1950s in this country which over and over "proved" Marxism wrong by "empirically" illustrating how inequality is disappearing in the U.S., how the rise of the new "middle class" has created the best of all possible worlds, how the combination of free elections and democratic "pluralism" guarantees citizen control, to realize how trivial the Szymanski method of "class analysis" really is. Such bourgeois analyses were often filled with falsehoods, but often they weren't. The problem was always with their basic method and approach, which the "radical sociologist" Szymanski should know. Facts are just that—simply facts. And they will remain such unless they are synthesized, concentrated into a higher truth. To do this fully requires Marxist theory.

Leveling of income differentials and other indicators of social status can mean many things. In Britain they tax the rich so much as to force some into emigration. In Sweden the "welfare state" has narrowed income inequality quite a bit. Yet in these countries there are still capitalists who accumulate capital and still workers who sell their labor power and this whole process is still called exploitation. Reggie Jackson, Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor—leaving aside what they invested as capital with their earnings—all accumulated more wealth than a good many capitalists. Does this prove that the U.S. is not a capitalist society? Of course not! Yet this is the kind of "fact" Szymanski wants us to accept as proof that socialism is alive and well in the USSR.

But even given these essential methodological objections, it is still possible to refute Szymanski on his own terms, since the evidence of diminishing inequality and growing popular control he cites doesn't really paint a true picture.

First, on inequality. Szymanski is certainly correct in noting

that there is less inequality in the Soviet Union than in the West. It would be quite a surprise if this were not the case, since the Western capitalist countries have been dominated by the bourgeoisie for a long time while the Soviet Union was socialist until some twenty years ago. And although socialism does not yet eliminate inequality, and while there were serious errors made in the Soviet Union under Stalin which actually contributed to exaggerating such inequality, the expropriation of all the old exploiters and the fact that the new exploiters have only recently arisen from the ranks of the people themselves, are important factors shaping Soviet society today.

Moreover, that the Soviet capitalists do not yet appropriate large amounts of wealth for their own personal use only reveals what good capitalists they are. For the "ideal" capitalist, unlike the feudal lord, would keep nothing for himself (other than what he needs to live) and reinvest all; this is the logic of the system. The new and rising capitalists of the Soviet Union may, to some small degree here, resemble more the new and rising capitalists of 17th century Britain, puritanical in their zeal for business and contemptuous of vulgar consumption. Although as we shall see this is true only relative to their rivals in the West.

For the Soviet bourgeoisie does pretty well for itself. The figures Szymanski cites showing a narrowing of income differences are very general and tell us little about *which* differences have been narrowed. Indeed, the narrowing of differences which has definitely taken place in recent years has been mainly within the ranks of the people, between collective farmers and industrial workers, between skilled and unskilled, between higher and lower-paid industries. The migration of Soviet collective farmers to urban areas since WW2 has been the main equalizing factor. Another factor has been the development of the Soviet petty bourgeoisie which marks the Soviet Union as essentially the same as advanced monopoly capitalism everywhere.

Szymanski presents no evidence that inequality between the masses on one side and the elite ruling class of state capitalists on the other side has decreased. Nor can he, because most of the information available on social inequality in the USSR comes from the work of Soviet sociologists who are *forbidden* to examine the life of the rulers. Szymanski offers a small bibliography of bourgeois authorities to back his contentions. One of these, Murray Yanowitch, states that

"The upper reaches of the social structure have been systematically excluded from even the best of the Soviet studies. . . empirical studies of what is acknowledged to be a hierarchal social structure are

essentially confined to the primary units of economic organization. . . Personnel employed in the higher levels of government ministries, planning agencies, the scientific establishment—not to speak of the Party organization—are not included in the 'continuum' of socio-occupational strata whose incomes, life styles, and opportunities for inter-generational transmission of status are investigated. . . ."<sup>67</sup>

And another expert notes that only "snippets of information on the salaries of some of the top-most earners have been collected by a few Western observers, but no one, as far as we are aware, has attempted to systematize them." Nonetheless, he concludes: "That the top salaries can be extremely high is beyond doubt."<sup>68</sup> In short, it is completely dishonest for Szymanski to present information and cite sources which show only a decrease in inequality among different sections of the popular masses as evidence of decreasing and limited inequality between the masses and the ruling class.

Further, even if we exclude the rulers themselves for a moment, it is clear that Szymanski downplays the inequality which does exist. Yanowitch has shown that Soviet statistics on income differentials often conceal more than they reveal since "they fail to distinguish the specific positions to be found at the poles of the occupational hierarchy and thus tend to understate the range of inequality in earnings."<sup>69</sup> For example, one study of an individual plant showed the average earnings of the highest-paid stratum to be only two to three times greater than those of the lowest. Yet it turns out that this highest stratum is itself quite differentiated, since it is defined simply as "managerial personnel" including everyone from foremen up to the plant director. And even plant directors are pretty small fish in the Soviet capitalist sea.

Szymanski plays a similar sleight-of-hand game. He notes that the income spread between the highest paid sectors (education and culture) and the lowest (collective farmers) dropped from 3.2 times in 1963 to 2.2 times ten years later. But what does this show? The education sector includes everyone from school janitors to major educational administrators and the category collective farmers means, according to Soviet statistical methods, everyone from rank and file farm workers to highly trained agronomists and even farm chairmen.

Szymanski cites a number of figures showing wage rates for managers and other lower-level bourgeois and acts as if these were the highest pay anyone could get. But even these figures are low, for in the Soviet Union everyone from the managerial level on up is generally paid not at the assigned rate for the position but at "per-

sonal rates" (*personal'nye oklady*). These are not established for the office but for the individual who holds it, supposedly in recognition of "outstanding knowledge and experience." By definition, these rates are considerably higher than the officially authorized and recorded norms and Soviet sources make clear they are a "mass phenomenon."<sup>70</sup>

Also noted by Szymanski is "the fact that children of the intelligentsia (about 15% of the population) in the Soviet Union have 3-4 times better chance of graduating from college than the children of unskilled workers." "This is a serious inequity," he admits, but "the Soviet press has been criticizing it for years."<sup>71</sup> Well, the capitalists everywhere are always open to this kind of "criticism"; but what has happened is that the situation is getting worse. Over the past two decades the capacity of the university system to accommodate high school graduates has not kept up with the development of secondary education. Where, in the years 1950-53, 65% of high school graduates went on to higher education, by 1970-73 this had dropped to 19%.<sup>72</sup> This can only mean increased competition to enter college which will inevitably favor the children of the intelligentsia and those generally having more advantages, including the families of the top strata of the Soviet party and state.

The new Soviet ruling class cannot be defined simply by looking at money wages and other such indicators. Constrained to keep their socialist cover, the Soviet rulers hide their wealth and power from the light of day. But word of the privileges they enjoy sneaks out.<sup>73</sup> Szymanski may cite figures and wage rates but he fails to inform us of all the special things which accompany high position, particularly if one is on the Party *nomenklatura*.\*

There is, for instance, the network of *Beryozka* shops and other special stores where only the elite rulers can shop, where prices are way below what the masses pay and where high-quality and imported goods rarely, if ever, seen in ordinary markets are available. There is the *kremlevskii payok*, the "Kremlin ration": each high-ranking member of the Communist Party, the cabinet and the Supreme Soviet receives enough high-quality food to feed their families luxuriously every month—free. An entire department of the Party Central Committee, the *upravlenie delami*, "Administration of Affairs," operates and equips an extensive empire of special apartment buildings, country dachas, guest houses, rest homes, car pools, domestic servants and special stores.

Szymanski doesn't tell us about *Zhukovka*, the luxurious series of small towns outside Moscow reserved exclusively for members

\*The *nomenklatura* is the official list of high Party office-holders at all levels. It is estimated to number up to two million names. All receive privileges appropriate to their station on the list.



of the political, industrial and academic elite. Here the leaders, and those scientists, artists, writers, etc. who have contributed to the continuation of their rule, live in special dachas—rent free—and shop at special stores with special prices and goods. As one Soviet citizen complained, "A Central Committee member does not get much pay but he gets all kinds of things free. He can get his children in the best universities or institutes, or get them abroad. They [the leaders] are all sending their children abroad now, exporting them like dissidents."<sup>74</sup>

Of course, at this point Szymanski will complain that this kind of thing started under Stalin, that Brezhnev and Co. are just continuing what began under socialism. To a significant extent this is true. But two points must be made about it. First, this was a weakness of socialism under Stalin. The system of *nomenklatura* may or may not have had a certain necessity to it in the 1930s (most likely it was designed to keep graft under control; in a sense regulated rather than spontaneous), but very clearly it was a grievous error. Socialism must seek to narrow the inequalities between classes and strata on the basis of developing the productive forces and, most important, carrying out revolution in the economic base and the superstructure. And proletarian political leadership should not be rewarded materially. Stalin was correct in combatting "petty bourgeois equalitarianism," but clearly he went much too far in this and the Soviet people are paying a price for it today. This error contributed to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR.

But it is also essential to recognize that such inequalities have greatly expanded since the mid-'50s and that, more important, these privileges were not, under socialism, based on capitalist relations of production as outlined earlier. Unlike today, under Stalin the bureaucrats were closely watched. They would gladly have traded privilege for security and power; but this the proletariat would not and, to a great extent, did not give them. The difference between privilege then and privilege now was graphically delineated in a simple but revealing statement an old woman made to the wife of an American reporter one night outside one of the special stores serving the New Czars. "We hate those special privileges," she said. "During the war when they were really our leaders, it was all right. But not now."<sup>75</sup> Of course, it is not necessary to accept that these privileges were proper under Stalin as this woman seems to spontaneously conclude, to recognize the main point here: what was a mistaken policy and a weakness under socialism has become integral to the exploitation and oppression of the masses under social-imperialism today.

So much for diminishing inequality.

As for Szymanski's ridiculous argument that there is extensive

participation of the masses in Soviet political life, one is tempted to advise him to enroll in a class on the fundamentals of Marxism. Here he might encounter works like Lenin's *Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* which make clear the Marxist stand on democracy. Here Lenin notes that "It is natural for a liberal to speak of 'democracy' in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: 'for what class?'"<sup>76</sup> Lenin urges us to penetrate beneath the kind of *formal* equality and participation exalted today, for instance, by the "pluralist" school of bourgeois political science. Indeed, he points out that "the *more highly* democracy is developed, the *more* the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers."<sup>77</sup>

The point, Dr. Szymanski, is not whether there are electoral forms or whether the social origin of the bureaucrats is working class or whether "mass organizations" are consulted by the leadership. All these things exist to one degree or another in the U.S. and where they do it is usually a sign that the bourgeoisie is more effectively employing a democratic cover in exercising its dictatorship. For Marxist-Leninists political participation is and must be linked to the question of proletarian dictatorship, and the substance of mass control must be expressed in the correct proletarian political line of the Communist Party. As Mao put it, referring specifically to the Soviet situation:

"The paramount issue for socialist democracy is: Does labor have the right to subdue the various antagonistic forces and their influences? For example, who controls things like the newspapers, journals, broadcast stations, the cinema? Who criticizes? These are a part of the question of rights. . . . Who is in control of the organs and enterprises bears tremendously on the issue of guaranteeing the people's rights. If Marxist-Leninists are in control, the rights of the vast majority will be guaranteed. If rightists or right opportunists are in control, these organs and enterprises may change qualitatively, and the people's rights with respect to them cannot be guaranteed."<sup>78</sup>

Under Khrushchev there was a minor explosion in the number and influence of new organizations ostensibly designed to bring citizens into public activity. These have continued under Brezhnev and Kosygin, though the pace of their expansion has slowed. The main point of such institutions has been to bring *professional* opinion to bear on decision-making and has gone hand in hand with robbing the masses of their effective representation through the lead-

ership of a revolutionary party.

For example, in 1969 a Kolkhoz Council was created to better involve collective farmers in policy formulation. But, as *RP7* noted, this "democratization" created little more than a chamber of commerce for the agrarian bourgeoisie. Of its 125 members only eight were rank and file *kolkhozniki*.<sup>79</sup> As the bourgeois expert T.H. Rigby has noted, "in more and more areas of Soviet life, effective decision making is coming to mean professional decision making, and this is clearly incompatible with the detailed supervision and control by party officials or by the 'party masses.'"<sup>80</sup> Contrast this situation with Mao's comment that "The non-professional leading the professional is a general rule."<sup>81</sup>

But Szymanski also cites figures indicating increased working class participation in public affairs, for instance, that in 1954-55 workers were only 11% of Soviet deputies, but in 1972-73 they were 40%. These figures must be taken with more than a grain of salt. First of all it is common knowledge that the Soviets themselves are not real decision-making bodies. For this, it is necessary to turn to the Party leadership units. And, according to one fairly sympathetic bourgeois account, the number of workers and peasants identified among full members of the Party Central Committees of all the constituent republics in the USSR increased only from 5.2% in 1961 to 7.6% in 1971.<sup>82</sup> It is also well-known that Soviet figures tend to inflate the number of active members of Party and especially Soviet organizations. And the category "worker" is usually defined by Soviet statisticians to include large numbers of white-collar technicians and Party bureaucrats of working class origin who may not have actually worked in a factory for decades. But more important than the class origin—or even the current class position—of a particular leading person is his line. Trade unions—and even certain so-called "communist" organizations—in this country provide rich examples of individuals who were (or in some cases still are) workers and occupy some leadership position yet represent and uphold the outlook and interests of the capitalist class against the masses of workers.

Involvement of the masses in participatory organizations may actually increase the influence and power of an individual bureaucrat or manager. This has been recognized even by U.S. political scientists. For instance, the description of the PTA offered by Robert Dahl, a notorious apologist for U.S. capitalism, could well be transposed to describe the role of numerous "mass organizations" in the USSR:

"Ostensibly . . . a Parent-Teachers' Association is a democratic organization of parents and teachers associated with a particular school, brought into be-

ing and sustained by their joint interests. In practice, a PTA is usually an instrument of the school administrator. Indeed, an ambitious principal will ordinarily regard an active PTA as an indispensable means to his success. If no PTA exists, he will create one; if one exists, he will try to maintain it at a high level of activity."<sup>83</sup>

That this is also the purpose of most Soviet institutions of "popular participation" is clear if one looks at how the principle of one-man management has developed in recent years. This principle is applied to all economic units from the lowest to the highest levels and was instituted under Stalin (at that time, however the power of one-man authority was checked somewhat by the com-misar system and, more important, by the political police, though there were clearly problems with this latter method in particular). Soviet management literature defines one-man management as:

"the leadership of each production unit (enterprise, shop, section) is assigned to a single executive who is endowed by the state with the necessary rights to manage, and who bears full responsibility for the work of the given unit. All individuals working in the unit are obligated to fulfill the instructions of the executive.

To correctly implement the principle of one-man management it is of great importance that there be a clear demarcation of obligations, rights, and responsibilities. . . .<sup>84</sup>

One-man management was instituted in Lenin's time as a means of stabilizing the economy in response to serious syndicalist and ultra-democratic deviations. But this principle has proven incorrect as a method of management in socialist society because it stifles the ability of the working class to control the means of production in reality and holds back the development of new communist production relations. Mao Tsetung criticized the principle of one-man management and its concomitant principle of personal responsibility (each to his post), and defended the system of revolutionary committees instituted in China under his leadership as collective organs of management. Of one-man management he said, "All enterprises in capitalist countries put this principle into effect. There should be a basic distinction between the principles governing management of socialist and capitalist enterprises."<sup>85</sup>

Recently Soviet leaders have called for more "collegiality" and the "humanization" of management. Kosygin himself noted that

"Better management is impossible unless it becomes more democratic and unless the participation of the masses is considerably extended. . . Every worker should be made to feel that he is one of the owners of the factory."<sup>86</sup>

But experience has shown that use of the word "feel" here was not accidental. For it has been managerial *style* rather than the *substance* of decision-making that Soviet management experts have endeavored to change. According to one Soviet advocate of "collegial" management, the manager lets his subordinates "participate actively" in decision-making but "leaves to himself the right of final decision." "His art consists of the ability to use power without appealing to it."<sup>87</sup>

A significant example of how the Soviet rulers look at real mass participation was the attitude they took toward the Akchi experiment in agriculture. Akchi was a state farm in Kazakhstan which during the late '60s achieved astounding success in production by instituting a new system of work organization wherein "the functions of production and management were not divided" between different occupational strata. The farm's white-collar administrative apparatus was reduced to an absolute minimum and everyone participated in both productive labor and decision-making. In the words of the experiment's organizer, "it is important in our methodology that all people should manage in turn."<sup>88</sup>

In some ways, though not fundamentally, Akchi indicated what was demonstrated by the famous Tachai farm brigade in China under Mao's leadership—that high levels of mechanization, long hours of hard work, or the presence of technological experts were not the key factors in developing production. Rather, the conscious activism of the masses in waging the class struggle and revolutionizing the relations of production and the superstructure is the only basis for successfully pushing the economy forward. Despite the fact that Akchi promised the new Czars a possible improvement in their chronically bad agricultural situation, its political implications were far too ominous. The final verdict on Akchi concluded that

"we must see two features of it: on the one hand an attempt to 'drag' into being a communal form of work collective—clearly in conflict with the collective and state farm forms—known in Russia since prerevolutionary times and representing a rudimentary form of organization of work collectives on democratic principles, and on the other hand a more or less successful form of organization of production utilizing value levers. The first clearly has no prospects for its development, but the second is being

used and deserves wider application. . ."<sup>89</sup>

In other words, the only thing the Soviet rulers found productive in this was the fact that work teams were reimbursed according to the value of their product. What made Tachai a pacesetter in China was not simply its terraced fields and higher labor productivity, but the revolutionary organization of production based on raising the consciousness of the masses and advancing the class struggle to transform the production relations, which were responsible for achieving these things. Yet it was just this aspect of the Akchi experiment that the Soviet rulers scorned, much as revisionists like Liu Shao-chi in China sought to tear down the red banner of Tachai and, failing this, paint it white. For capitalist roaders everywhere models like Tachai, or even—under very different conditions, where capitalism has been restored but the appearance of socialism is retained—experiments like Akchi, are only models insofar as they prove effective gimmicks to get the masses working harder.

The question of political participation is thus a question of line. And it is clear that the line of the Soviet revisionists leaves the masses as essentially powerless as in any other capitalist country.

#### SOCIAL-IMPERIALISM: A SYSTEM, NOT A POLICY

Szymanski's article in the *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* seeks to show "empirically" that the Soviet Union is not an imperialist country, although its foreign policy "might well be hegemonic and oppressive."<sup>90</sup> But page upon page of facts and figures assembled by him are mostly irrelevant since the author's version of imperialism is an un-Marxist, eclectic jumble of bourgeois nonsense in the first place.

In what follows it will not be possible to fully refute all of Szymanski's empirical "data" fact for fact. Rather, what will be concentrated on is his anti-Marxist method with more specific refutation of only several illustrative points. For more detail on the actual workings of Soviet imperialism around the world, concrete examples and explanation of how the Soviet state-monopolists extract surplus value from the working people of other countries, and an analysis of how the Soviets use the *form* of trade to mask the content of capital export, the reader is advised to see *RP7*, Chapter IV.

Szymanski defines imperialism as "the political and economic domination of a nation or region in order to economically exploit it in the interests (normally of the ruling class) of the dominant nation."<sup>81</sup> This, despite Szymanski's claim to the contrary, has nothing to do with Lenin's definition of imperialism. (Incidentally

or not so incidentally—imperialism, in the Leninist meaning, is *always* in the interests of the ruling class of the "dominant nation" as opposed to the fundamental interests of the masses of people of this nation as well as those nations oppressed by imperialism.) Most essentially, Lenin demonstrated that imperialism is a *stage* in the development of capitalism, its highest and final stage. For Lenin imperialism was no more an economic policy aimed at the subjugation of specific nations than it was a political or ideological policy. Imperialism in Lenin's view was intimately tied to the development of monopoly and the merger of bank and industrial capital in finance capital, which brought to the fore the parasitic nature of capitalism and demanded the outward expansion of national capital which comes in conflict with both the economic and national development of nations in less developed parts of the world and the ambitions of rival imperialists.

There isn't space here to go deeply into the correct understanding of the imperialist system and its laws, but it should be noted that Szymanski follows the lead of a number of fashionable petty-bourgeois "Marxists" (Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Harry Magdoff) who examine imperialism essentially from a Ricardian under-consumptionist view of capitalist crisis and on this basis focus on unequal trade relations and "dependency" as the essence of imperialist economics. Szymanski notes that

"In capitalist economies profits are to be made by securing overseas markets for individual enterprises, while maintaining overall economic prosperity and the continuation of the capital accumulation process requires finding export markets for the system as a whole to counter the inherent tendency to underconsumption (promoted by workers not being paid enough to buy back everything that they produce)."<sup>92</sup>

This is a completely wrong approach. First, there is no "inherent tendency to underconsumption" in capitalism unless one is a follower of Paul Sweezy's neo-Keynesian brand of bogus Marxism.\* There is rather the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, leading to crises of *overproduction*, which, Marx stressed, means mainly *overproduction of capital* and only consequent to

\*For a critique of underconsumption theories of crisis see "Against Sweezy's Political Economy," *The Communist*, Vol. 2, No. 1. Ironically another very good refutation of underconsumptionism by John Weeks, "The Sphere of Production and the Analysis of Crisis in Capitalism," appeared in the same issue of *Science and Society* as Szymanski's review of *RP7*.

this the overproduction of goods which appears on the surface as an inability of the working class to buy back what it has produced. Further, under imperialism, because of the monopolization and high degree of concentration of capital, there is what Lenin called a "superabundance of capital" which can't be profitably invested in the home market and must be invested abroad. Under imperialism, Lenin showed, the key to relations with other countries is not the export of *commodities* but the export of *capital*. Though they do swindle others where possible, the imperialists do not exploit the people of other countries essentially through cheating in trade—selling commodities abroad that they can't sell at home and at an inflated price relative to what they purchase from those countries. Instead it is the investment (direct or indirect through loans, etc.) in the economies of those countries and the accumulation of surplus value produced by the working people there that constitutes the imperialist robbery. The backwardness of many such countries does in various ways enable the imperialists to secure a high rate of profit there, but here again, export of capital, not unequal trade, is the essence of the matter.

In another article published elsewhere Szymanski has the gall to attribute his erroneous views to Lenin whom he claims got them from the English liberal critic of imperialism, J.A. Hobson.† Szymanski advises his readers to look at Lenin's notebook on Hobson for confirmation of this. And turning here one does find Lenin has copied out Hobson's statement that "if the consuming public in this country raised its standard of consumption to keep pace with every rise of productive powers, there could be no excess of goods or capital clamorous to use Imperialism in order to find markets." But Szymanski has apparently neglected to note that in the margin next to this statement, underlined twice, Lenin acidly remarked: "ha-ha!! the essence of philistine criticism of imperialism."<sup>94</sup> Further on in the notebook Lenin approvingly quotes Hobson's statement that the essence of imperialism "*consists in developing markets for investment, not for trade, [again underlined twice in the margin by Lenin] and in using the superior economies of cheap foreign production to supercede the industries of their own nation, and to maintain the political and economic domination of a class.*" (emphasis in original)<sup>95</sup>

For Lenin imperialism does not simply hold others down nor is it the ripping off of wealth from poor countries by the rich through

†Szymanski advanced his anti-Leninist "theory" of imperialism in an article called "Capital Accumulation on a World Scale and the Necessity of Imperialism," *The Insurgent Sociologist*, Spring 1977 prompting a debate with Magdoff in *Monthly Review*, March 1977 and May 1978. Both authors are, however, trapped in the underconsumption-dependency model, though Magdoff's relatively greater sophistication enables him to make mincemeat of Szymanski.

unequal trade, although it may include this. Imperialist investment abroad can, and in the long run must, develop the economies of the countries it dominates but it must do so on a capitalist basis—in particular on a basis favorable to the foreign capital—and in contradiction to both the welfare of the broad masses of workers and peasants and to the development of the independent home market in these places. As Lenin put it in an earlier work still applicable to the analysis of imperialism, "The development of capitalism in the young countries is greatly *accelerated* by the example and aid of the old countries." (emphasis in original)<sup>96</sup>

Szymanski's efforts to present empirical "proof" that imperialism is not profitable to the Soviet bourgeoisie are in line with a long tradition of bourgeois criticism. In every case, these bourgeois writers examine one or another colony or some instance of imperialist aggression and attempt to show that the imperialists lost money there. Leaving aside the veracity of these attempts, their method—and it is Szymanski's method as well—is to confound the profit motive with the actual realization of profit itself. It is as if the failure of Lockheed Aircraft to return a profit were offered as "proof" that Lockheed could not be a capitalist enterprise. Moreover, Szymanski ignores the fact that competition between imperialist countries, like competition between rival capitals domestically, involves preventing rivals from securing important markets, raw materials, etc., even where doing this means a short-term loss of profit. Economic interests in the final analysis determine political, military and ideological policies but these in turn react back upon the economic interests. This is the Marxist, the dialectical materialist, view which is opposed to the mechanical economic determinism which writers like Szymanski set up as straw men to knock down in their "refutation" of Marxism.

On this account it is enlightening to turn one last time to our "Stalinist" friend, Mr. Aurthur, who agrees with Szymanski but documents his case on this point more weakly. Aurthur applauds Soviet attempts to push out the U.S. imperialists from where they are well entrenched: "Brezhnev's foreign policy," he assures us, "far from being a continuation of Khrushchev's capitulationism, is a reaffirmation of the correctness of Stalin and Molotov."<sup>97</sup> Brezhnev has certainly abandoned the largely limp-wristed stand of Khrushchev who, despite his famous shoe-banging, caved in to the pressure of U.S. imperialism left and right. But this is no return to Stalin's revolutionary foreign policy. It only signifies that the Soviet Union has become the "hungry" imperialist power, seeking to muscle in on the U.S. and gain a new redivision of the world. By and large the Soviet Union does not yet have an empire,

it does not yet earn much from its still beginning exploitation of the world's people. But the point is that *it wants and needs such an empire*—and, it must be said, is rapidly acquiring one. And it is this drive, together with the equally essential drive of the U.S. to defend its own empire and, ultimately, to also expand, which is pushing the world toward a new world war.

With this understanding in mind the reader of Szymanski's article will quickly see that most of his arguments are at best irrelevant to the essence of the Soviet Union's international actions and relations. But some specific comments are still called for on a few of his contentions.

According to Szymanski profitability plays no role in Soviet foreign trade. Since Soviet trading corporations purchase goods for export from the producing enterprises and the state budget pockets all profit from overseas sales, Szymanski contends that the sphere of production is insulated from the world market, that "Soviet productive enterprises have absolutely no connection with foreign trade."<sup>98</sup> This was the case under socialism when a mainly proletarian line guided the activities of these trading units and their relations with production enterprises. Under Stalin, as Szymanski admits, Soviet foreign trade was geared to strengthen the autarchic (or self-reliant) nature of the economy and it was only after Stalin's death that the USSR entered into world markets on a broad scale.

But, putting aside the fact that imperialism does not mainly operate through trade, this argument today is based on the assumption that the production enterprises are themselves independent of the state monopoly. In other words, it is based on the straw man of the "free market" model of Soviet capitalism. The point is that both producer and exporter are linked through state-capitalist ownership and control.

Moreover, Szymanski's point is just plain false. For if Soviet industry is sheltered from the effects of foreign trade how is one to explain the following complaint of a Soviet production executive:

"Economically accountable foreign trade associations are in an even more privileged position. If such an association's agents abroad are not able to sell machinery the association has ordered and paid for, it has the right to return it to the manufacturer, even after several years, and demand its money back immediately. Industry bears all losses connected with reconditioning the machinery, storing it and searching for a new buyer."<sup>99</sup>

This executive did not, by the way, request an end to industrial

responsibility for such foreign losses. He merely requested that industrial enterprises share also in the profits from foreign trade.

Szymanski also claims that were the Soviet Union really imperialist "we would expect that the favorable balance of trade (a surplus of exports over imports) would represent a significant proportion of capital formation."<sup>100</sup> Nonsense! If this were necessarily so how would one explain the unfavorable balance of trade (and even more unfavorable balance of payments) of U.S. imperialism during part of the post-WW2 period? And such a view would make the most imperialist segment of U.S. capital the wheat farmers because the U.S. exports a surplus of grain!

On Soviet aid to developing countries Szymanski comments:

"The interest rate on U.S. loans is now the same as on Soviet loans; but the forms of repayment are very different. Repayment to the Soviets is in the form of locally produced goods, often the goods produced by the enterprises developed with foreign assistance."<sup>101</sup>

But isn't this just like investing in whatever product is being produced? How is it different from a banker who loans out capital and expects repayment in the product of the enterprise? South Korea has received a great deal of U.S. "aid" and now ships a lot of light industrial products to the U.S. from Korean-owned factories financed by U.S. capital. Does Szymanski mean to argue that this kind of aid has benefited the people of south Korea? In fact the kind of aid by the Soviets ties the recipient to the Soviet Union almost as if the "aided" enterprises were directly owned by the USSR. That direct ownership is often not employed simply reflects the struggle against imperialism world-wide which often forces the imperialists to abandon direct and open *forms* of control while retaining the *content* of imperialist domination.

Szymanski also points out that "Soviet aid is exclusively to the state sector with very few exceptions."<sup>102</sup> Although in some cases this simply represents the Soviets bringing the existing comprador bourgeoisie in a colonial (or neo-colonial) country into its orbit, it also brings up the question of the national bourgeoisie discussed in *RP7* which explains such aid on the basis of a *class analysis* of the oppressed nations (an analysis sorely lacking in Szymanski's presentation). The national bourgeoisie is that section of the capitalist class in the oppressed nations which opposes imperialism because it cannot compete with the foreign monopolies and is driven down in its attempts to expand and conquer the home market. The national bourgeoisie has, to varying degrees, played a positive role in the anti-imperialist struggle and

where it has come to power it has often struck real blows against imperialism and won significant concessions which even may benefit the masses of workers and peasants. But, as *RP7* stressed,

"... history has also shown that once in power, the national bourgeoisie may often fall under the sway of one or another imperialist power and sections of it can be transformed into a comprador bourgeoisie dependent on imperialism. This can occur even where the national bourgeoisie has played an independent anti-imperialist role for some time. Only a revolution led by the working class and the establishment of a socialist society can finally and fully free Third World countries from the rule of foreign imperialism."<sup>103</sup>

Soviet aid to the "state sector" is thus only an indication of the Soviet strategy of trying to dominate these countries by winning the allegiance of the national bourgeoisie and thus, step by step, transforming it into a new comprador bourgeoisie. Again to quote *RP7*:

"The strategy of social-imperialism is to encourage such development of the public sector, while at the same time maneuvering the countries of the Third World into dependence on the USSR for loans, military shipments, etc. . . . The fact of the matter is that the 'state sector' is not necessarily 'anti-capitalist,' as any worker in the post office can readily testify."<sup>104</sup>

Believe it or not, Szymanski even applauds the Soviet Union's emergence as a major arms merchant, arguing that "Modern military establishments can now be created by the less developed countries without promoting dependency on the U.S., France or Britain."<sup>105</sup> What a contribution to world peace and the liberation of nations! Our professor even has the nerve to mention Somalia and Ethiopia as positive examples. What possible benefit to the masses of oppressed people anywhere has come from Soviet fueling of *both* sides (at different times) in the recent war between these two countries? What can by any stretch of the imagination be called "progressive" about the use of Soviet arms by the phony-Marxist but authentically fascist Ethiopian junta against the just liberation struggle of the Eritrean people and against the Ethiopian masses themselves? And look at Afghanistan, another "positive" instance of Soviet military aid cited by Szymanski. The

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recent pro-Soviet military coup there (hardly a mass revolution) reveals just what kind of "independence" the Soviets aim for with their military aid.

Finally Szymanski discusses the relationship of the Eastern European states to the Soviet Union, contending that the USSR has "played a central role in accelerating the economic growth and all around development of the Eastern European economies."<sup>106</sup> Marxist-Leninists must still develop a more thorough understanding of the capitalist workings of the Eastern European economies and their relationship with the Soviet Union, a task called for in *RP7* which is, along with a full response to Szymanski on this subject, beyond the scope of this article. But it must be said that even the most superficial look shows that Szymanski's line is a fairy tale. Besides the abundance of facts and analysis, some of which is in *RP7*, which demonstrate Soviet robbery of its East European "allies," apparently our professor has even "forgotten" Czechoslovakia 1968 and Poland 1971 and 1975. Perhaps he studied under ex-President Ford whose campaign statement that "there is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe" provoked laughter everywhere, especially in Eastern Europe itself.

In particular, Szymanski's attempt to compare Soviet relations with COMECON to Western relations with the Third World is no more than a cheap debater's trick. Obviously these groups of countries are very different from each other. The Eastern European countries are not mainly semi-feudal oppressed nations. They are developed capitalist countries, at least some of which (certainly East Germany) have reached the imperialist stage themselves. If a comparison is to be made, it would be to U.S. domination over its bloc of imperialist allies in Western Europe and Japan, although quite obviously Soviet control over Eastern Europe is at present firmer than U.S. control in the West.\*

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\*In light of this it should be noted that designation of the East European states as "colonies" in *RP7* is somewhat misleading. While the term correctly conveys the image of domination and subjugation of the masses in these countries by Soviet social-imperialism, it incorrectly and unscientifically implies that the struggle here will be qualitatively different than in Western Europe and must pass through a separate stage of national liberation before moving forward to proletarian revolution. Of course in both Western and Eastern Europe there is the question of combating superpower domination, but that does not mean that the struggle there is like in the colonial (or neo-colonial) countries, that proletarian-socialist revolution is not the present stage of the struggle.



## CONCLUSION

One might think it sad that people like Szymanski could move from outrage over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to open espousal of the Soviet role in that part of the world within ten years. But all the incorrect theses advanced by the apologists for Soviet capitalism are, as has been shown, closely tied to their rejection of the Marxist-Leninist world view, its stand and method. On every question—the nature of the class struggle under socialism, the role of profit and market categories in the planned economy, the existence of a new bourgeois ruling class, and the imperialist export of capital—these apologists deviate from and openly flaunt fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism even as they claim to uphold the banner of this science.

They began with outrage. But they never converted this outrage to scientific understanding. Both intimidated and intrigued by Soviet power, fearful of admitting what is now obvious, that the proletariat can lose the power it has won, these writers reject the stand of the working class, the stand of uncompromising revolutionary struggle, for the easy way out supposedly offered by a ride on the Soviet coattails. Their degeneration points to the instability and vacillation of the radicalized petty bourgeoisie which they seek to represent and lead. But if one does not resist imperialism in all its forms one will surely capitulate to it. This is what these authors have done; but the revolutionary proletariat will have no truck with capitulation in any form.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Jonathan Aurthur, *Socialism in the Soviet Union*, Chicago, 1977, p. v.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>See "History Develops in Spirals," *Peking Review*, No. 43, 1974.

<sup>4</sup>V.I. Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet," *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 310.

<sup>5</sup>An often used expression of Mao during the Chinese revolution. During the Cultural Revolution he wrote, "The conclusion is still the two familiar comments: The future is bright; the road is tortuous."

<sup>6</sup>See numerous articles on the struggle between the Legalists and the Confucianists in *Peking Review*, 1974.

<sup>7</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup>Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1962, Vol. 2, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Report to a Joint Session of the All-Russia CEC . . .," *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 434.

<sup>11</sup>Karl Marx, "The Class Struggles in France," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 223.

<sup>12</sup>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup>*Red Papers 7*, Chicago, 1974, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder," *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 23-24.

<sup>15</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Report to a Session of the All-Russia CEC . . .," *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 300.

<sup>18</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Once Again On The Trade Unions, The Current Situation And The Mistakes Of Trotsky And Bukharin," *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>Mao Tsetung, "Talk at the First Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party," in Stuart Schram, ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, New York, 1974, p. 283.



<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>22</sup>David Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State*, Boulder, Colo., 1976, pp. 125-26.

<sup>23</sup>T.H. Rigby, "The Soviet Politbureau: A Comparative Profile, 1951-1971," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, July 1972, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup>J.V. Stalin, "Report to the 18th Congress of the CPSU," in J.V. Stalin, *Leninism: Selected Writings*, New York, 1942, p. 477.

<sup>26</sup>Mao Tsetung, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, New York, 1977, p. 83.

<sup>27</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup>*Red Papers* 7, pp. 55-56.

<sup>29</sup>Al Szymanski, "Socialism or Capitalism in the USSR?," *Science and Society*, Vol. XLI, No. 3, Fall 1977, p. 339.

<sup>30</sup>*Red Papers* 7, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup>V.I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Childishness And The Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 335.

<sup>32</sup>Szymanski, "Socialism or Capitalism," *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>33</sup>J. Wilczynski, *The Economics of Socialism*, 3rd ed., London, 1977, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>37</sup>P. Volin, "When the Profitable is Unprofitable," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, October 6, 1976, pp. 10-11.

<sup>38</sup>Y. Liberman, "Are We Flirting With Capitalism?," *Soviet Life*, July 1965, p. 39. Quoted in Wilczynski, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup>Y.M. Zinoviev, *Prybyl i povyshenie effektivnosti sotsialisticheskogo proizvodstva* (Profit and the Increase in Efficiency of Socialist Production), Moscow, 1968, p. 102.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>41</sup>Writings of "market socialism" theorists in English include: Wlodzimierz Brus, *The Market in a Socialist Economy*, London, 1972; Branko Horvat, M. Markovits, and R. Supek, eds., *Self-Governing Socialism: A Reader*, White Plains, New York, 1974; I. Konnik, "Plan and Market in the Socialist Economy," *Problems of Economics*, Dec. 1966, pp. 24-35; and Ota Sik, *Plan and Market Under Socialism*, White Plains, New York, 1967.

<sup>42</sup>Writings of "optimal planning" and planometric theorists in English include:

N.P. Fedorenko, *Optimal Functioning for a Socialist Economy*, Moscow, 1974; L.V. Kantorovich, *The Best Use of Economic Resources*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965; I. Kotov, "Some Problems in Applying Mathematical Methods to Economics, and the Political Economy of Socialism," *Problems of Economics*, August 1966, pp. 3-14; V.S. Nemchinov, *The Use of Mathematics in Economics*, Edinburgh, 1964; V.V. Novozhilov, *Problems of Measuring Outlays and Results Under Optimal Planning*, New York, 1969; Albina Tretyakova and I. Birman, "Input-Output Analysis in the USSR," *Soviet Studies*, April 1976, pp. 157-88.

<sup>43</sup>V.A. Volkonskii, *Model optimalnogo planirovaniia i vzaimnosviasi ekonomicheskikh pokazatelei* (A Model of Optimal Planning and the Interdependence of Economic Indicators), Moscow, 1967, p. 68. The author is not a "market socialist" but a planometrician.

<sup>44</sup>Mao Tsetung, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, p. 75.

<sup>45</sup>Szymanski, "Socialism or Capitalism," *op. cit.*, p. 340.

<sup>46</sup>Marie Lavigne, "L'Oligopole dans la planification" (Oligopoly in Planning), *Economics et Societes*, T. XI, Nos. 6-9, June-Sept. 1977, p. 1033.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 991-1042.

<sup>48</sup>L. Abalkin, "Perfection of Financial Autonomy in Conditions of Developed Socialist Society," *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk (ekonomika)*, 2, 1976, pp. 26-36.

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<sup>51</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>53</sup>V.V. Laptev, "Make Economic Legislation a Tool of Economic Efficiency," *Ekonomika i organizatsiia promyshlennogo proizvodstva*, 6, Nov.-Dec. 1975. Excerpts from this discussion in English translation may be found in American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, *The USSR Today: Current Readings from the Soviet Press*, Columbus, Ohio, 1977, pp. 47-50.

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<sup>56</sup>L. Kistin, "Questions of Theory: The Measure of Labor and the Measure of Consumption," *Pravda*, June 28, 1975, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup>Mao, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, p. 79.

<sup>59</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>60</sup>Hugh T. Patrick, "The Phoenix Risen from the Ashes: Postwar Japan," in James B. Crowley, ed., *Modern East Asia: Essays in Interpretation*, New York, 1970, pp. 311-31.

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<sup>62</sup>Mervyn Matthews, *Class and Society in Soviet Russia*, New York, 1972, pp. 311-19.

<sup>63</sup>Two surveys of the debate are Murray Yanowitch, "A Note on Sexual Stratification," in his *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, White Plains, 1977, pp. 165-86 and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "The Female Industrial Labor Force: Dilemmas, Reassessments and Options in Current Policy Debates" (unpublished paper at a conference on "Problems of Industrial Labor in the USSR," Washington, September 1977).

<sup>64</sup>Szymanski, "Socialism or Capitalism," *op. cit.*, pp. 341-42.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>67</sup>Murray Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, White Plains, 1977, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>68</sup>Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 93.

<sup>69</sup>Yanowitch, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup>Szymanski, "Socialism or Capitalism," *op. cit.*, pp. 342-43.

<sup>72</sup>Yanowitch, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>73</sup>This account of special privileges is taken from Chapter 1 of Hedrick Smith, *The Russians*, New York, 1976, an accurate and readable introduction to the phenomena of Soviet life. A more thorough factual account by Mervyn Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, London, 1978 is scheduled for publication this summer.

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<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>76</sup>V.I. Lenin, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 235.

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<sup>78</sup>Mao, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, p. 61.

<sup>79</sup>Jerry F. Hough, "Political Participation in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January 1976, p. 7.

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<sup>81</sup>From a U.S. government collection of Mao's post-1949 writings.

<sup>82</sup>Hough, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>83</sup>Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, New Haven, 1961, pp. 155-56.

<sup>84</sup>F.F. Aunapu, *Chto takoe upravlenie* (What Management Is), Moscow, 1967, p. 16.

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<sup>93</sup>Al Szymanski, "Even Mountains Are Moved: A Response to Magdoff," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1, May 1978, p. 54.

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<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 430.

<sup>96</sup>V.I. Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 490.

<sup>97</sup>Aurthur, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>98</sup>Szymanski, "Myth or Reality," *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>99</sup>G.A. Kulagin, "My Partners, The Authorities and the 'Rules of the Game'," *Ekonomika i organizatsiia promyshlennogo proizvodstva*, 2, March-April 1975, translated in AAASS, *The USSR Today*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>100</sup>Szymanski, "Myth or Reality," *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 141.

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<sup>103</sup>Red Papers 7, p. 62.

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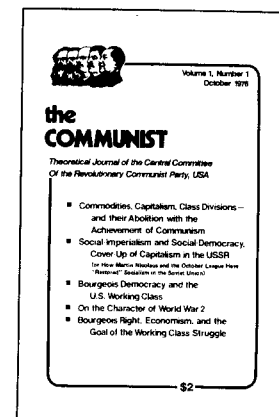
<sup>105</sup>Szymanski, "Myth or Reality," *op. cit.*, p. 147.

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