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The technical and cultural basis for workers' socialism in the modern world

The following speech was delivered at the MLP May Day meeting in Seattle this year. It has been revised by the author for publication.

Just what is Bush's New World Order? Mostly it's the same old imperialism surrounded by hot air and rhetoric.

Some of this hot air is the gloating over the collapse of alleged communism in Eastern Europe and proclaiming the glorious triumph of capitalism. The often unstated punch line is "you'd have to be nuts to be a socialist". And of course, with this point of view, the theory of Marx and Engels is to be regarded, at best, as old fashioned and anachronistic.

In this way the Brave New World Order tries to impose a cowardly taboo against socialist thought.

Bureaucratic state-run capitalism of the ex-Soviet-bloc is indeed disintegrating rapidly. But this does not mean that state-regulated corporate capitalism in the west is a spring chicken. In fact, it is racked with crises and decay as well. It isn't brave, new or orderly. We will generously concede to Bush that it is in the "world."

Take the USA: It is still aggressively marauding all over the place (preferably against small, weak countries) as Operation Desert Massacre shows. It is still afflicted with barbaric racism, as the recent police beating in Los Angeles exemplifies. (It is interesting to note that the bourgeois press admitted that such brutality was not the exception, but common practice. Then, it promptly forgot about it.) Poverty, illiteracy and every social ill are growing. And so on. Somehow it seems fitting that the ruling circles chose senile Reagan to lead it in the 1980s. (Or was it Nancy and her astrologer?) We are now perhaps seeing the initial stages of a deep economic crisis. Capitalism's moral bankruptcy is being joined with its economic bankruptcy.

The decay of capitalism is, ironically, a result of the revolutionary character of capitalism, its character to relentlessly revolutionize the technology of society. It creates an over-production crisis; more is produced than the restricted market can absorb. People are in need, because there is too much. And vice versa.

It may seem strange for a socialist to talk of capitalism having a revolutionary character. But this is the ABCs for the capitalists themselves, who are always in a life and death pursuit of ever-more profits. Today the revolutionizing of technology is coming up against the barrier of the economic organization within which it is taking place. This economic organization is antiquated and a positive hindrance to human progress. Today, as is evident in the USA, it produces the situation whereby the more science and technology advance, the worse the conditions of the working masses become and the more dismal their prospects for the future.

But the marvelous technological accomplishments of the last couple of centuries are not to be scoffed at on this account. Nor on account of the fact that their misuse in the frantic pursuit of profit, and to hell everything else, is now threatening the world with ecological catastrophes.

These advances in human ingenuity have created extremely favorable material, scientific and technological, conditions for establishing a new socialist economic organization of society. By replacing capitalist organization with socialist organization the fulfillment of human needs will

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Solidarity with SHARP in Portland, Oregon Police and courts help nazi skinheads frameup anti-racist skinheads

From the June 21 leaflet of the MLP-Seattle:

Condemn the jailing of Portland anti-racists— Down with government protection of Nazis!

Mark Newman is a leader of the anti-racist movement in Portland. On April 24, he was sentenced to 16 months in prison. He was falsely accused of assaulting two nazi youth in Portland last summer. This charge stemmed from an incident last August 26, during a series of confrontations between about 30 nazi skinheads and about 20 anti-racist youth. (The details of events that day are explained in another article.) The charges against Mark were fabricated by nazis because he is a leader of the anti-racist struggle in Portland. For the same reason, the police who investigated the fight, the District Attorney and Judge Frankel assisted and carried out the frame-up of Mark.

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Mark and another anti-racist fighter, Tom Tegner, are now doing time in the state prison in Pendleton, Oregon. The police and the court ignored blatant evidence and filed no charges against any of the nazis involved in the August 26 confrontations.

Mark is also awaiting trial on charges stemming from a protest against Dan Quayle in Portland last September. During this protest, mounted police charged the demonstrators. After the battle that followed, 51 youth were arrested, including Mark. For throwing a cup of ice water on one of the police horses, Mark has been charged with "disorderly conduct, reckless endangerment, attempted harassment, and endangering a police animal."

These attacks on Mark and Tom represent nothing but government persecution of the militant anti-racist movement in Portland. Mark and Tom are political prisoners.

Racist Skinheads and the Murder of Mulugeta Seraw

The nazi skinhead movement in Portland developed in the 1980s. With the expansion of the numbers of street youth, a handful of racist bully skinhead gangs developed. (In the U.S. today, the skinhead symbol is utilized by the racist skinheads, but there are also anti-racist skinheads, including blacks.) The racist skinheads are linked with the neo-nazi and klan organizations.

These elements cause problems for the youth generally. They carry out street attacks and disrupt musical and other cultural gatherings with racist, anti-woman, anti-gay and random bullying. The same problems exist in Seattle, but on a smaller scale.

In November 1988, a gang of nazi skinheads in Portland brutally murdered Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian student. This outrage sparked an upsurge of anti-racist organizing, especially among youth.

The Success of SHARP in Portland

One of the newly formed organizations was the Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP), led by Mark Newman, age 25. The SHARPs distinguished themselves by organizing confrontations against the nazis on the streets. SHARP also distributed anti-racist literature to youth. In 1989 and 90, the militancy of SHARP and others made life difficult for the nazi skinheads. Their ranks declined.

This success came from a fierce struggle. The SHARPs took a bold stand. With their shaved heads and embroidered jackets, even their appearance on the streets spoke

of defiance of the racist bullies.

Why Does the Portland City Administration Protect the Nazis?

Portland's mayor and other officials claim to abhor the nazis. One big flaw with this angelic pose is that a large portion of the Portland police themselves have a nazi mentality. The Portland cops have a well known reputation for racism and they didn't change their stripes when the nazi skinheads came on the scene.

When SHARP first started organizing in Portland, the police mistook them for racists. Many times cops would approach SHARPs and congratulate them for their work against minorities. (The SHARPs militantly set them straight.) If this is how the cops approached SHARP, one can imagine the nature of their relations with the nazis.

The Portland police quickly figured out what the SHARPs were and their camaraderie turned to harassment. Many times the SHARPs have had to defend themselves from attacks by racist cops.

The whining of Portland's liberal mayor against the nazi skinheads is pretty phony when the nazis inside the police department continue to run amok. And the jailing of Mark and Tom shows that the policy of suppressing the anti-racist movement flows from higher echelons than the Neanderthal cops on the streets.

Why would "respectable" officials want to protect nazis? Perhaps they are just overzealous proponents of the Bill of Rights, and want to make sure the racists have their freedom protected? No, the truth is that in various ways, racism is a cornerstone of government control. Racism is a tool to keep down the poor and divide the working class. In particular, racist gangs are a force to balance against progressive movements among the working classes. The politicians may not favor every terrorist act of the racists, but they find their existence useful. That's one reason why tiny rallies of the KKK are typically protected by hundreds of cops.

George Bush on a Rampage Against "Willie Quotas"

The promotion and usage of racism by politicians starts at the White House. Look at Mr. Bush's latest forage into domestic policy "issues." The Congressional Democrats have a mild civil rights bill that merely seeks to make the filing of lawsuits against discrimination easier. If enacted, it is not likely to make much of a dent in the institutional discrimination. Yet Bush is on a tirade against the "quotas" bill. He doesn't use racial slurs in his speeches. But "quotas" is a code word for the racist lie that blacks are unqualified and inferior. Bush is signaling the right-wing racists and promoting them to action.

In the 1988 elections, Bush ran against Willie Horton. He sought votes by promoting the racism of anti-crime hysteria. Apparently in 1992, George hopes to run against

"Willie Quotas," to seek votes from pushing the racism and demagogy of "reverse discrimination."

Since getting burned in the 1960s, the bourgeois establishment has adopted the rhetoric of "equality." But the reality of racism remains deeply ingrained. The mass movements are the only real power to challenge it.

In 1989-90, the Portland anti-racist fighters scored victories with the tactics of mass actions, militant confrontations and political agitation. The fact that the nazi skinheads had to run to the cops for protection exposed their puny and cowardly nature. It also showed just how phony their "anti-establishment" posture is. The nazi skinheads are no more anti-establishment than the establishment is anti-racist. This exposure is important because it is impossible to maintain the motion of racist gangs without preserving the myths of being "tough" and "rebellious."

Today, the nazi skinheads in Portland have regained some of the strength they had lost. But this resurgence will in turn give rise to new upsurges of anti-racist struggle. The government persecution of the anti-racists presents difficulties. But while it can jail individuals, it can not jail the movement.

Solidarity with Mark Newman and Tom Tegner!

Fight racism with militant action! □

Events of the August 26 Fight Against the Nazis in Portland and the Frame-up of Mark Newman

Last summer, many racist skinheads moved into some apartments near 20th and SE Hawthorne in east Portland. They were carrying out terrorist attacks on the residents there. They congregated on the streets in groups as large as 40. SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) concentrated on organizing against the nazis in the Hawthorne area. Protests were organized.

On August 26, SHARP held a planning meeting which included other anti-racist activists as well. In the middle of the meeting, a report was received that the nazis at 20th and Hawthorne seemed to be having a party. The meeting decided to immediately carry out a protest against them. 20 SHARPs and other anti-racists went to the apartments and marched on the sidewalk, militantly chanting slogans against the nazis and against racism. The nazis yelled out the windows at the anti-racists, but were afraid to come out of their house. After about 20 minutes, the anti-racists left and returned to their meeting.

Three SHARPs returned to the apartments to take down license plate numbers of the nazis. As they were sitting in their car in the parking lot about 30 nazis surprised them

and smashed the rear window. One SHARP took a serious blow from a pipe which cut open his head and fractured his skull. The SHARPs left. They picked up several of their comrades, including SHARP leader Mark Newman, and drove off to take the injured fighter to a hospital.

On the way to the hospital, two nazi women, who had been with the group of 30, were spotted at a convenience store. The car included both SHARPs and other anti-racists, and 3 individuals in particular were extremely angry and insisted on stopping and confronting the two nazis about the attack earlier. The car stopped, against the wishes of Mark Newman. Three anti-racists went up to the nazi women and soon began attacking them. Seeing this, Mark immediately yelled for them to stop, which they did. The whole group again headed to the hospital.

As they were driving, the police pulled over the anti-racists. The non-SHARP activists escaped. The police brought one of the two women to the car and she identified Mark Newman and Tom Tegner as having attacked her. This woman, Leanne Fossi, is a well known nazi in Portland who had taken part in earlier racist attacks and in confrontations with SHARP. She knew Mark Newman was SHARP's leader and fingered him for that reason. The police, of course, took the nazi's word for it. This despite the fact that the police themselves had to take the injured SHARP to the hospital, and his wounds were far more

serious than those of the nazis.

The other woman who was attacked dropped out of the nazi movement and rejected racism several *months later*. She dropped her charges stemming from the August 26 incident and confided to the SHARPs that Mark Newman was not involved in the attack and that the nazis merely wanted to frame him. She did not testify at the trial, however.

Tom was charged with Assault II and Mark was charged with two counts of Assault II, one for attacking the girls and one for "commanding the attack." Mark's lawyer, a court-appointed public defender, convinced him to plea bargain, thinking that he would avoid prison and receive probation. Mark made the mistake of accepting this advice. He pled guilty to "commanding," even though he didn't do it. This lawyer was apparently completely naive as to the functioning of the legal system in such a political case. Mark has appealed, but it is most likely that he will serve his sentence before the appeal process goes through.

The trials of Mark and Tom were no ordinary criminal cases, but political railroad jobs. The handing out of prison terms for first offense assault shows that the court was out to get them. While the anti-racists made various mistakes, the imprisonment is nothing but a political attack on the militant anti-racist struggle. It is government intervention to protect the Nazis. □

From the Communist Party of Iran: Iraqi Kurds; victims of whom?

The following statement is from an English-language leaflet circulated by supporters of the Communist Party of Iran. It is dated May 6 and was written by Koorosh Modarresi, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran and of Komala, its Kurdistan organization. We give our views on and criticism of this statement on pages 7-9 of this issue of the Supplement.

Calamity is not a precise word for what has happened to Iraqi Kurds. The world is a witness to vagrancy and eradication of the Kurds, this time, on a national scale. Hundreds of children and elderly fell victim to hunger, cold, and lack of basic necessities. But the real dimensions of this tragedy go far beyond its stunning immediate aspects.

This is not the first time that Iraqi Kurds have been victims of savage suppression. The history of the last 75 years, after Iraq's independence, is full of harassments, collective executions, forced evictions, and mass destructive bombardments. But perhaps this is the first time the Kurdish people and their just struggle against oppression has ended in such a dramatic physical and psychological collapse.

The military balance between the Kurdish resistance movement and the Iraqi regime had never shifted so much in favor of the Kurds. Never before had the Kurdish Peshmarga forces controlled such a vast territory, including major cities in Iraqi Kurdistan, or commanded such a large number of fighters and arms. The Iraqi government, on the other hand, had never appeared so frail. Yet, with the first signs of Iraqi advance towards Kirkuk, the Kurds fled without much serious resistance. For those who have experienced any popular uprising, or have ever studied them, the flight of the Kurds, who had risen and demolished all vestiges of central power in Kurdish cities just weeks earlier, must have indeed appeared unexpected.

For all the decent people of the world who had condemned, and had campaigned against, the U.S. war efforts, for those who had opposed Bush's New World Order as a framework for a new round of hegemonism and militarism, it was no less than a shock to be confronted with a people who applauded U.S. soldiers as their saviors and to find national leaders and "radicals" who condemn the U.S.A. not for its military intervention in the region, but for halting it. "Desert Storm" appeared to find fervent supporters in most unlikely quarters. Even Bush would not have dreamed of hearing the echo of Yankee Doodle in the Kurdish mountains, hummed by these ex-anti-imperialist radicals.

Kurds and Arabs have never been so vigorously set apart by their own national aspirations. The split created between the two nations has become so deep that generations on

both sides will fall victim to this enmity. Arabs found themselves betrayed by Kurds in what they felt was resistance to the destruction of Iraq by U.S. aggression. As far as anti-American Arabs were concerned, the Kurds stood alongside Israel and the parasite Arab sheikdoms. For their part, the Kurds found themselves and their just struggle for a decent human life, once again being suppressed by a brutal and chauvinistic Arab government.

In order to analyze the Kurdish calamity correctly one must consider it in its full dimensions and go beyond its immediate human aspects. It would also be quite naive to see the Iraqi government's atrocities against the Kurds as the only responsible factor in this dilemma. A tenable analysis of the situation in Kurdistan is not possible without a review of the role of all parties involved, and a positive attempt to analyze the events in Kurdistan in the context of the recent developments in the region as a whole.

* * *

It is a mistake to divorce the recent developments in Iraqi Kurdistan and in particular the Kurdish uprising from the spectacular events that had preceded it in the region. Contrary to what our Kurdish nationalist radicals and the "objective" media want us to believe, history does not begin with the recent uprising in Kurdistan. It must be understood in the context of the Gulf crisis.

The occupation of Kuwait by Iraq gave the U.S. a unique opportunity to reassert its threatened position in the world power structure after the end of the Cold War and to met the challenge of a rising Europe. The New World Order was a concept that embraced this ambition. "Desert Shield" and "Desert Storm" were operations designed to help realize this objective.

There was never any doubt that the U.S. policy was to be pursued at the cost of the death and misery of millions of people in the Gulf region. In this colonial intervention, as all previous cases, the U.S. drove right to the heart of very old problems in the region, problems which had been created and nurtured by the British Empire and exploited by the U.S. previously. The national and religious divisions and strife in the region, between Arabs and Jews, Kurds and Arabs, were exploited as elements assisting the U.S. adventure in the Gulf.

To reduce "casualties", the U.S. hoped to internalize the conflict in Iraq. Any blood shed among Iraqis would not be counted on the balance sheet of casualties. The rediscovery of the previous crimes of Saddam against the Kurds was complemented with "signals" to the Kurdish leaders, pointing to the requirements of an "acceptable" alternative government in Iraq, initiating a holy war of "free" media, such as Free Iraq's Radio organized by the CIA against Saddam, were elements of such a policy.

Kurdish nationalism on the other hand, resorted to their

classical strategy of basing their quest for a share of power on the splits between regional and global powers, and capitalizing on the national oppression of the Kurdish people, who were to become the future victims of the very same nationalists in power.

They welcomed the events which they thought would improve the balance of power with the central government. They sided, first in publicity and then in practice, with the U.S. policy. They were ready to side with the devil if necessary, accept the brutal massacre of the Iraqi people among them Kurds and the demolition of the whole country, if it furthered their case. They started to botch [muddle together] a coalition alternative government from Kurdish nationalist currents and the reactionary Shiite religious parties.

"Saddam is finished", was the picture that all the coalition, now including Kurdish nationalists, tried, with success, to convince the people with.

The defeat of the Iraqi army and the protest of the people in the south gave the signal. THE Kurdish people in the cities turned all their just disgust from the previous brutalities of the Iraq regime against its military and administrative institutions. In less than two days from March 7th, all governmental headquarters were captured or destroyed. Kurdistan was "liberated". Hundreds of thousands of Kurds armed by the government changed sides and joined the forces of the parties. Opposition forces headed towards Kirkuk to convince the Allies of their control over the Kurdish areas and their credibility as a pillar of an alternative government. They hoped for preserving what they could from the dead's inheritance for their own future advantage, and began to disarm the insurgent people and sent them back to their homes. "Liberated" Kurdistan passed from the hands of the Iraqi government into the hands of the Kurdish nationalist parties.

The illusion came to an end when the "dead" started to move and "Desert Storm" stopped behind the gates of Basra. Arab nationalism, humiliated by the Allies and agitated by a feeling of betrayal from the Kurds, facing a vulnerable enemy, did what all nationalists do to the weaker enemy; extreme brutality.

The moving of the supposedly dead Saddam brought just the same reaction among the people as when a supposedly *dead monster* comes to life again. Panic broke out even among the well-armed nationalist parties who were unwilling or found themselves unable to defend the cities.

The uprising of the Kurdish people was not an outcome

of a preceding process of political upsurge and did not reflect prior political advances in relation to the government and a breakpoint in the real political balance of power, as is normally the case with other uprisings. A revolution creates a feeling of legitimacy in the masses, it engenders a sense of invincibility and a psychology and actual institutions which face and resist reaction and restoration. There were not characteristics of the Kurdish uprising. The people were led, with almost no intermediate stages, to armed confrontation with the Iraqi regime, under the influence of the false picture portrayed of the situation by the U.S. and the Kurdish nationalist currents and leaders. What happened afterwards, hasty mass retreat in the face of Iraqi advance, was the natural consequences of this circumstance.

The tragedy is not yet over. Kurdish nationalists found in the misery of the people a new base to bargain for power. They dream of becoming the next PLO without caring that this would mean to reduce the Kurds to a people without a country like Palestinians, and changing the Kurdish problem, not only in Iraq but in the whole region, to the problem of Kurdish *refugees*. They welcomed the "Safe Haven" plan in this context.

The fact is that these nationalists are leading the Kurdish struggle against national oppression to a familiar situation, to reduce it to a campaign linked to imperialist interests, like those of the Afghan Mujahidin, Nicaragua's contras, the UNITA movement in Angola, and others. Whether or not they will succeed in creating a Kurdish state at the price of misery and humiliation for other nations, the same as the case of Israel, the tragedy of the Kurds will not yet be over.

The Kurdish people are victims of competing bourgeois interests on a global level. They are victims of post-Cold War U.S. hegemonism, wounded Arab nationalism, and desperate Kurdish nationalism.

The permanent end to the sufferings of the Kurdish masses depends, most of all, on whether workers and genuine communists will find enough energy to fill this deep split and enmity between Kurds and Arabs, tell the truth, and show that Arab and Kurdish workers have no interest in national oppression and instead of siding with their "national" bourgeoisie they should create their own united class barricades against capitalism and all its states and parties.

Koorosh Modarresi
May 6, 1991 □

A comment on the views of the Communist Party of Iran on the Iraqi Kurdish uprising

Throughout the Persian Gulf crisis, we have looked forward to hearing what communist forces elsewhere were saying and doing. In particular, we have awaited news from the comrades of the Communist Party of Iran, which is active in a vital corner of the Gulf region. CPI is involved in the underground resistance to the Islamic regime in Iran, and through its Kurdistan section Komala, it is also one of the main forces in the armed resistance of the Iranian Kurds against the Teheran regime.

Unfortunately, we have been receiving very little information from CPI. For several years now, there has been no *Bolshevik Message*, their English-language international journal (neither has there been any announcement of its suspension). However, there has been some limited circulation of a few leaflets with views from the CPI leadership on the Gulf war. One of these leaflets we reprinted in the *Supplement* in our February 20 issue.

Above we reprint another leaflet, *Iraqi Kurds; victims of whom?* (See pp. 5-6) This is an article by comrade Koorosh Modarresi, member of the Central Committees of CPI and Komala. Another article with similar views was also published as a prominent piece in a recent *Worker Today*, an English-Farsi newspaper published with CPI support from Sweden. Presumably comrade Modarresi's article is representative of the views of CPI leadership.

His article is dated May 6, after the Kurdish uprising in Iraq was crushed by Saddam Hussein's military. It offers a summation of the uprising. We do not know if CPI produced any statements during the Kurdish uprising itself. So we do not know what advice CPI or Komala gave to the Iraqi Kurds during the war or its immediate aftermath. This would be of some significance, because CPI and Komala have had radio stations in the mountains of Kurdistan which are listened to by Kurds not just in Iran but also in Iraq.

We have reservations

Although there are things we agree with in comrade Modarresi's article, we have reservations about a general thrust we see in it.

The article provides an impassioned critique of the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist leaders for having led their people down a blind alley. Despite the large-scale support the uprising had and its spectacular initial successes, the uprising quickly melted away. The article pins the largest part of the blame for this on the nationalist leaders who pinned their hopes not on the people's own struggle but on support from the U.S.-led war coalition which had devastated Iraq.

We agree that the nationalist leaders deserve the strongest condemnation for this stand. However, we are saddened by the fact that we do not see the same type of fervor directed at Arab bourgeois nationalism which rallied to Saddam Hussein's side in the U.S.-Iraq war and promoted Saddam's military adventure as a shortcut to anti-imperialist struggle in the Middle East, totally ignoring everything Saddam Hussein had stood for. Instead, the article by CPI seems to find something positive in this Arab nationalism.

Let us explain.

A failure to provide the overall context

In the first place, we are glad that the CPI comrade condemns the suppression of the Kurds by the Iraqi regime. And he also points that such suppression has a long history. We would have preferred a sharper condemnation of Saddam's regime for its brutality against the Kurds; still the fact that CPI does condemn Iraq's suppression of the Kurds is welcome. Such a condemnation is essential for revolutionaries. We have been dismayed to see that some groups in the left found something revolutionary in Saddam's savage crushing of the Kurds; to them the Kurds were just pawns of imperialism and Saddam's suppression of their uprising was seen as a victory over imperialism.

The CPI comrade proclaims his main intention to put the Kurdish issue within the overall context of the Gulf war. An overall analysis is indeed essential, otherwise the Kurdish question merely becomes a humanitarian tragedy, which world imperialism is only too ready to exploit — as it is doing with its current pose as the greatest friends of this long-suffering people. This side of things the CPI comrade sees. Unfortunately, he fails in his proclaimed goal of placing the Kurdish question within the overall context. In fact, his analysis is one-sided. While it indicts imperialism, it fails to show the actual role of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime in the recent conflict.

The CPI comrade points to how U.S. imperialism used the crisis over Kuwait to reassert its threatened position in the world power structure with the end of the Cold War. And he denounces the U.S. for using the Kurdish question as a weapon in its war with Iraq.

But where is the analysis of Saddam's role in this conflict? We are aware that CPI did not support the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, but in this leaflet even that stand is missing. Instead we are merely told about how the U.S. "drove right in the heart of very old problems in the region" left over from colonial days. But the invasion of Kuwait had very little to do with "old problems" although

such excuses were offered by the Iraqi regime. This invasion had everything to do with "new problems"; the Iraqi regime was in economic crisis and it was feeling pressed to pay debts back to the Kuwaitis after having served them and world imperialism in the long, bloody war against Iran. This invasion was not an act against imperialism, nor a liberating action against the corrupt and tyrannical Kuwaiti monarchy. In fact, Saddam Hussein had been playing quite well with U.S. imperialism and the Gulf sheikhdoms throughout the 1980s.

To fail to point out Saddam's role in the conflict is to offer a one-sided criticism of who's responsible for the tragedy of the Kurds. The simple fact is that both Saddam and Bush were responsible for this tragedy. Saddam — for having a long-standing policy of extreme national oppression; and Bush — for having first bombed the hell out of all Iraq (including Kurdistan), then encouraging their uprising, and finally by conniving to help Saddam crush the Kurds.

Was it wrong for the Kurds to rise up?

The CPI comrade rightly denounces the Kurdish nationalist leaders for seeking to tie the Kurdish struggle to U.S. imperialism's war chariot and points to the fact that this is part of their classical strategy of seeking their aims through relying on splits between regional and global powers.

However, the article, in its ardent desire to criticize the Kurdish bourgeois nationalist leaders, leans towards slighting the genuine strivings of the Iraqi Kurdish people. After all, it wasn't the corrupt stands of the leaders but the people's strivings which were the basis of their recent uprising. One would get the impression from the CPI article that the Kurds were wrong to rise up against the Iraqi regime, that rising up itself meant playing into the hands of U.S. imperialism. Although there are a few hints which could be taken to be favorable towards the Kurdish people's strivings, the idea is however created that it was wrong for the Kurds to take advantage of the crisis of Saddam Hussein regime's.

We fully agree that it was a crime for the Kurdish leaders to line up with U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism was out to have its way with Iraq; it used the method of devastating Iraq; and although it winked at the Kurds, it was not interested in having them win either. But we are surprised to note that the CPI comrade misses an important feature of U.S. imperialism's actual role regarding the Kurdish uprising. While the comrade refers to imperialism's encouragement of the rebellion and the Kurdish leaders' attempt to tie the Kurdish struggle to imperialism, he ignores that U.S. imperialism connived at the suppression of the Kurds. Bush encouraged them to revolt, but he never intended them to win. The U.S. did want Saddam out, but only if he was replaced by another tyrant cut of the same mold; they did not want the victory of any kind of popular uprising, even if it made the nationalist leaders part of a new regime in Iraq.

This fact highlights that although the nationalist leaders may have pledged to be friendly and warm to the U.S., this did not endear their cause to imperialism. In other words, even though the leaders wanted to tie the struggle to imperialism, this did not make the objective struggle a simple pawn of imperialism.

The CPI comrade also seems to suggest that it was wrong for the Kurdish masses to take advantage of the crisis of the Ba'ath regime and rise up, because it created bad feelings and resentment among Arabs.

A dubious analysis of the split between Arabs and Kurds

We are dubious about the way the CPI comrade is describing the split between Kurds and Arabs. He says, "Arabs found themselves betrayed by Kurds in what they felt was resistance to the destruction of Iraq by U.S. aggression. As far as anti-American Arabs were concerned, the Kurds stood alongside Israel and parasite Arab sheikhdoms. For their part, the Kurds found themselves and their just struggle for a decent human life, once again being suppressed by a brutal and chauvinistic Arab government."

Undoubtedly, bad feelings and mass confusion exists among Arabs and Kurds as a result of recent events. And where revolutionary ideas are not present, national antagonisms, prejudices, and racism will fill the gap. And so long as some of these bad feelings exist among ordinary Arab and Kurd masses, it does raise complications for the future of progressive struggles. But we think CPI's view on this is oversimplified and again, one-sided.

For one thing, it completely ignores that there is a long history of Kurds feeling abandoned by Arabs, because mainstream Arab politics, even of the radical variety, has refused to campaign for the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people. Oh yes, Syria has been willing to play with this or that dissident group inside Iraq, but that doesn't change the general picture. And the refusal of Arab bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces to condemn the oppression of the Kurds is the biggest factor traditionally undermining Arab-Kurd solidarity.

What is more, the CPI comrade ignores that there were Arabs involved in the uprisings against Saddam too. It wasn't just the Kurds who took advantage of Saddam's defeat. Other Iraqis, Arabs among them, did that too. The people in the south, for example. They all rose up at the moment of the regime's defeat not because they loved Desert Storm but because they hated the Ba'ath regime and saw a historic moment to break its back. This regime had not only brought great brutality against the Iraqi people but through its wars with Iran and the invasion of Kuwait had only brought one disaster after disaster to the Iraqi people. Quite often in history, anti-popular regimes defeated in war have become the object of mass rebellions.

Finally, it is wrong of the CPI comrade to restrict to the Kurdish nationalist leaders his legitimate passion against

the betrayal of the anti-U.S. imperialist cause. Where is his criticism, not to mention outrage, about the shortsightedness of Arab nationalism? It is well known that populist Arab forces — of various stripes — lined up behind Saddam Hussein as a bulwark of anti-imperialism. This was wishful thinking, not that different from the Kurdish leaders' wishful thinking that the U.S. was going to liberate the Kurds. This stand ignored everything that Saddam Hussein stood for, including his narrow, bourgeois reasons for going to war, and turned his regime's adventure into a matter of daydreaming. Kurdish nationalism wasn't the only

force which showed its desperation in the recent conflict.

This again returns us to what is at the core of the CPI statement's problem. There is a major flaw in CPI's overall stand on the war. While they do point to Iraq's role in precipitating this conflict and have condemned the invasion of Kuwait, overall they seem to consider this war to have been a fight between reactionary imperialism and progressive Arab nationalism. This is for sure the tendency in their stand, although they shy away from spelling this out straightforwardly. Wrong is wrong, but it would be preferable to make one's stand clear instead of vague. □

From the October Revolution to the first five-year plan Some questions of Soviet history

The following speech points to some of the areas of Soviet history being investigated and questions being considered. Although it cannot do this without presenting the author's preliminary judgments, it should be borne in mind that it seeks to provide a sweeping overview of the ongoing study, rather than present the MLP's conclusions on Soviet history. Final conclusions are still to be reached. In the meantime, more specific studies concerning the history of industrialization, collectivization, NEP, etc. will be published later in the Supplement, as will be the speech on theoretical issues.

Interjections from the floor are bracketed and in italics, and the speech has been edited for publication.

Fourth National Conference of the MLP, USA Fall, 1990

Three years ago our party set forward the study of the theory and practice of socialism as a foremost task on the theoretical front. Since that time the entire party has taken part in a study of the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the theory of socialism, and at our last congress we discussed some of the questions arising from that study. The Central Committee has also launched a comprehensive study of the history of the October Revolution and its aftermath. At the time of our last congress this study was just getting underway, and at that time we reported some of the issues which arose from a cursory examination of the history.

In this conference we would like to report on the state of this work and on a number of issues which arise in conjunction with it. In this speech I will be addressing some issues in the study of the history, and a second speech will be devoted to theoretical questions which have arisen in conjunction with this study. To the extent possible, we tried to divide up these questions between the two speeches; actually, there's going to be a reasonable amount of overlap.

A caveat

Comrades should note that, while considerable effort has gone into distilling and compiling factual materials on the history, this work is not complete. The digestion of these materials is still in its early days. Discussion about the history and about related theoretical issues has begun in the Central Committee. But this discussion is ongoing and necessarily preliminary in nature. We do not have the answers; we are better learning what the questions are. As a consequence, the ideas which will be presented in these speeches are still in the process of taking shape. What is presented here should be taken as an attempt to reflect the range of concerns coming up in that discussion, rather than

as an expression of developed views of the Central Committee.

Our approach to history

Before going on to the history itself, I would like to touch for one minute on our approach to the study of history.

Since the last congress we have put considerable effort into factual investigation of the history. Yet the present stage of compiling and distilling factual materials is still not complete. And this does not take account of further work which may still be required to make sense of those materials.

We do not undertake such detailed work for love of dusty and ill-lit library nooks. Rather, it is our insistence that we must proceed from facts; not from random facts, nor from a selection of facts which fit our prejudices and predispositions, but from a systematic examination of all available factual materials. And if many such so-called "factual" sources are necessarily suspect — and in few arenas does invention pass for fact so readily as in the study of Soviet history — then we are that much more obliged to exhaustively examine all available materials. We must sort out fact from invention and systematically place the facts in their historical context. Only in this way can we be dealing in analysis and not in prejudice.

We are dealing here with extraordinarily complex events. And they are moreover pathbreaking events, covering territory where no revolution before trod. There were no road maps for the Bolsheviks once they entered this territory, and there are no road maps for us in studying and evaluating this experience. And this is why we must insist upon a rigorous approach which guards against any rush to embrace simplistic, pre-digested answers.

All simplistic answers have in common that they reduce vital questions of the revolution to dead and lifeless truisms, and pass off pat formulae in place of serious analysis. This is true whether we are speaking of simplistic defenses of the Stalin era (an invisible coup d'etat one night in March 1953), or one-dimensional critiques of the period (the October Revolution rose and fell with the factory committee movement of 1917), or those "historical" critiques which place one outside the need for analysis (the October Revolution rose and fell as it did because that was the nature of the era in which it took place, so what else do you need to know?).

While we give great weight to the question of the facts and their historical context, this does not mean that we postpone all discussion until the "final" fact falls into place. Discussion is now underway, and it is part of the process whereby we go from more general views to more

particular and concrete views, and in the course of which many specifics of our earlier views are going to be negated while certain features are going to be strengthened and developed. But all this is based upon systematic attention to the facts and their historical context. And at no point do we lose sight of the necessarily limited character of the views which we formed in the earlier stages of this process. We regard these as working hypotheses which serve, not as quick and easy answers, but rather as roadmarks, to help us to focus the investigation which lies ahead.

Our earlier presentation of the history

At our last congress we had a presentation of some issues arising from an initial examination of the history. I would like to begin by reviewing what was presented at that time.

That presentation focused on three essential points: first, that it appeared that there was a decisive turn in Soviet society in the mid-1930s; second, that there was a question of studying both the achievements of the socialist revolution and the antecedents of that turn in the early history; third, that the turn in the mid-1930s did not mark the end of the history, but rather the inception of a process of degeneration which passes through a number of stages until arriving at a complete capitalist society, albeit one with a bureaucratic form of state-capitalism rather than Western-style capitalism.

I will go on to some further detail.

The October 1917 revolution was a socialist revolution which established the dictatorship of the proletariat. In carrying this out, the Russian workers also completed the unfinished tasks of the democratic revolution.

The task the Russian workers faced after October was not the overnight establishment of socialism but rather beginning a transition toward socialism; the more so, given the extreme backwardness of Russia, the preponderance of petty production, and so forth. The immediate aims of the Bolsheviks — expropriating the propertied classes, liberating the oppressed nations, establishing a new state power based on the toiling masses — were nonetheless of breathtaking scope.

Harsh reality obliged zigzags in policy and even concessions away from socialist principle. The biggest zigzag of all was the New Economic Policy (NEP). Power remained in the hands of the proletariat, but under intense pressure not only from abroad, but also from the partial revival of capitalist elements at home.

With the complicated situation created by NEP, further steps were needed. The Soviet workers had to go on an offensive of industrialization and push forward the collectivization of the countryside. This took place in the period of the First Five Year Plan. In this period great advances were made but there were also weaknesses and problems in how things were carried out, especially a tendency to lean too heavily on the use of administrative measures and measures "from above". Nonetheless one can still see in

this period an attempt to remain revolutionary and to be guided by a class line. This was as well a period of extensive mass activity. These suggest that the revolution continued to be alive at this point.

But after the first big steps were taken the "final and irrevocable victory of socialism" was declared in the mid-30s, and this became the banner for fundamental changes. The campaign against egalitarianism, which had begun already in 1931, resulted in privileged status for a stratum of engineers, state and economic officials, and military officers, drawn in large part from the ranks of the workers but subsequently transformed into a worker aristocracy. A bureaucracy, the groundwork for which had been laid earlier, now takes form based on this worker aristocracy and standing above the toiling masses. These changes are codified in a new constitution in 1936 which formally abandons the Soviet form and relinquishes the hegemony of the working class.

After this turn the Soviet Union was no longer pursuing a forward march toward socialism, albeit with problems, but was now in a trajectory of degeneration. The society did not completely change character overnight. There was a process of degeneration, going through its stages, leading up to outright state capitalism. Traditional private capitalism had largely been defeated. As a result, the degeneration led to the bureaucratic state capitalism we are familiar with from the last few decades. Only in the present day has it fallen upon Gorbachev to make a really big push for private capitalism.

From the October Revolution to the first five-year plan: Some questions of Soviet history

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The history revisited

This is about where our thinking stood two years ago.

Since the congress, our investigation has focused on the history prior to the mid-1930s. And from it arise some important questions about the earlier history.

Some of these questions revolve around the period of the First Five Year Plan.

It seems unlikely that we can characterize this period as we have in the past. Mass mobilization of the workers, for example, was a central feature in the launching of the industrialization drive in 1928/29. But calling a halt to the mass mobilization, and emphasizing reliance on the creation of a stratum of managers and engineers loyal to the party and state, were just as central to how industrialization was carried through from 1930 onward. So this process began very early and was actually an integral part of this period of the First Five Year Plan.

We are still studying how and why this came about. Was this a fundamental turn in policy? Was this turn inherent in the logic of the all-out drive for industrialization? We cannot yet answer this with confidence. But in any case, it is clear that we cannot characterize the latter half of the period — from 1930 onward — as one guided by a class line, at least not one that we would approve of. Nor can we readily put the problems of this period in second place to the achievements of the industrialization and collectivization battles. How these things are carried out — industrialization and collectivization — is central to the outcome of the relation of class forces, especially the relationship of the working class to the state and the role of the working class in the economy. The problems in this regard appear to be greater than we have stated in the past.

The period of 1928/29 still has many very interesting features, but we also have to be reluctant to give any characterization at this point of the earlier period, because of issues regarding what came before it, and what came after it. So this too requires further study.

I should mention that another central event of this period, as well as the industrialization drive, was the collectivization of agriculture, and here too there were problems. The collectivization of agriculture was rushed through at a whirlwind pace. There was a burning need for collectivization. But the rapid pace at which it was pursued does not seem to reflect the pace of development of the class struggle in the countryside. In fact, in its haste the party seems to have bypassed the complex questions of dealing with the social issues in the village and violated the principle of the voluntary character of collectivization. This seems to have had a wrenching effect on the entire society and to have set a pattern of relying on repressive measures in dealing with social issues.

So these are some issues regarding the period of the First Five Year Plan. There are issues earlier on as well. These issues arise especially on the front of the relationship of the party and state to the toiling masses. This question is posed in a striking way in the period of 1920/21,

but is not confined to it.

One thread of this question is bound up with the crisis conditions brought on by civil war. After October, the fight between revolution and counterrevolution took the form of a bitter civil war which all but consumed *Russia*. Revolution triumphed, due above all to the heroism of the workers and soldiers and the inability of the counterrevolution to win over any significant section of the peasantry. But by the end of the war the working class was exhausted, the peasantry was alienated, and the entire country was starving.

A second thread has to do with the ebb of the revolutionary tide after the high water mark which followed October. The participation of a large section of the workers in public affairs was an important feature of the immediate post-October period. But by the end of the civil war this participation was in retreat and the mass-democratic forms associated with the revolution had waned. Now it seems that, to a certain extent, this would have happened regardless of any particular history of the civil war. It would be a mistake to assume that the high tide of the revolution is going to carry on forever. But under the particular conditions — the legacy of destruction and dislocation brought about by the civil war — the mass participation waned with a vengeance.

Yet a third thread has to do with Bolshevik party policy. The crisis of war communism was not just brought on by the civil war, and by the objective conditions attendant upon the civil war; it was also a crisis in party policy.

It was against this background that the party launched the NEP to restore the country from the depths of ruin. But the question of the relationship of the mass of toilers to the party and state, and their role in public affairs, remained vexing problems. And it appears that the party did not address these problems in the subsequent period, but rather tended to turn its face away from them.

This then becomes the backdrop to the unfolding of the inner-party debates of the 1920s and the launching of the industrialization drive at the end of the decade.

How does this change our view of the history overall?

Our investigation has not gone to the point where we can put forward a comprehensive overview of the history, even on a most tentative basis. But what we have uncovered most recently suggests that the events of the mid-1930s may represent the culmination of processes which began earlier and developed further than we had previously suspected.

As for the October Revolution itself: studying the history in close detail, warts and all, can only further impress one with the remarkable energy, achievements and impact of the Revolution. The study we have undertaken will make it possible to remove the big words and slogans such as Soviet power, smashing the bourgeois state, and so forth from the realm of abstraction into something living and concrete, the better that the experience of the October Revolution may inform the next round of proletarian revolution.

These are the essential points which I have to make in this presentation, and I'm going to give some detail on them. I'll begin with the period of the First Five Year Plan.

The period of the First Five Year Plan

This period, if we include not only the four years of the Five Year Plan, actually falls from one Party Congress to another one. It's a bit complicated: the Five Year Plan was adopted a year after it was to have started, and was declared achieved a year before its finish date; so it was actually in effect for three years. But when we're talking about the general period, we should deal with the years from '28 to '33. So we actually should consider the period from the 15th Party Congress of Dec. 27 to the 17th Party Congress of January 1934, with the 16th Party Congress being held in the midst of it in June 1930.

[Question: "I didn't understand; from what you said, it was in effect before they declared it?"]

There was not an orderly process of carefully adopting a plan and then organizing the economy on the basis of the plan. They began working on the idea of a plan; and then they decided they were going to go for all-out industrialization, and started taking steps in the direction of all-out industrialization; and only sometime later got around to actually calling it the plan.

["When did they write it up and call it a plan?"]

The plan was formally adopted by a congress of Soviets in the spring of 1929. And a year, actually nine months, before its finish date, they declared that the plan had been achieved; they had achieved the Five Year Plan in four years. And they went on to the Second Five Year Plan, which also got written up a year or two late.

So this was a period of tremendous tumult. These little jokes about getting the plan written a year or two after it's gone into effect are just the merest hint of what things were like in those days. The entire society was turned inside out. They called it the Third Revolution; the first was February, the second was October, and this was the Third Revolution. In part this had to do with ideas about what they were doing. In part it actually felt like it. It felt like the period after the October Revolution or the period of the civil war. There was that much dislocation going on.

It seemed for a time that Soviet society was being turned completely inside out. This was a period in which events marched at a very rapid pace. Developments would emerge, would flare, and then die, all in a few months. Others would emerge and evolve, going from embryo through several stages in the space of a few months.

At the heart of this period lie two closely-related drives around which all else unfolds: the industrialization drive and the collectivization campaign.

The Imperative of Industrialization

Several years of the NEP had brought about some semblance of normalcy in the wake of the chaos and

destruction of the civil war. Exchange between the city and the countryside had been re-established. Industrial production approached its pre-war level. The standard of living of the workers had gained significantly from its post-war low. The restoration of the national economy had made possible some limited reforms, such as unemployment relief.

But chronic problems persisted. Unemployment not only persisted, but grew, as mass migration from the countryside to the cities — which had been interrupted by the civil war — resumed. The housing shortage in the cities was chronic and was becoming severe. There was an endemic scarcity of consumer goods.

No immediate relief from these problems was foreseeable. Exchange between town and village grew slowly, and was thought to be retarded by the relatively high price of manufactured goods. This in turn was linked to the low productivity of labor, and this in turn was linked to the archaic organization of production and a fixed capital base which was largely pre-1905 technology. And the terms of exchange between town and country largely precluded the accumulation of funds for investment in industry.

To explain the problem of accumulation for investment: an underlying aspect of the NEP, part of the deal so to speak, was that the peasantry would receive a bigger share of their production than they had before the revolution. The consequence of this was that taxes on the peasantry had to be kept to a reasonable level; the peasantry was quite poor. And the consequence of this was that the state had little revenue for investment in new industry. The economic achievements of the 1920s were based largely on bringing existing industrial capacity back on line. This was fairly easy, because by the end of the civil war they had gone down to about 25% utilization of capacity. So they were able in some industries to increase production fourfold without any new investment. But once they hit full capacity utilization, where do you go from there?

It was under these conditions that rapid industrialization came to the fore in the inner-party discussion. Industrialization, it seemed, could resolve the economic dilemma; increase the productivity of labor; make possible the reduction of prices and increase of exchange with the countryside; generate surplus funds for new industrial investment; put an end to the continual tug-of-war with the countryside — at every harvest there was a tug-of-war over what the price of grain would be; increase the weight of the working class in the society, and strengthen its ties with the party and state; and advance the march toward socialism.

These were the points being argued in the inner-party debate, and there's a certain basis to all these points. Industrialization was a burning necessity for marching forward toward socialism. In point of fact, industrialization was a burning necessity if you wanted to have any type of modern society. But it seems that a key to what kind of modern society you are building must be how industrialization is to be achieved and what role the workers are to play in this process. And this aspect of things did not

feature prominently in the inner-party discussion. As well, in the inner-party discussion there was a certain tendency to pose industrialization, not simply as a cornerstone of socialism, but as socialism itself. This tendency to equate industrialization with socialism became marked after 1930.

The Industrialization drive

A blow-by-blow description of the course of the industrialization drive is far beyond the scope of this presentation. Here I will confine myself to a few basic observations.

First, Soviet mythology gives great weight to central planning as the key feature of industrialization and of the Five Year Plans. The suggestion is that production takes place on a planned basis and anarchy of production becomes a thing of the past. In any literal sense this was not true. Production targets in the Five Year Plan were goals set to be exceeded, not just achieved but exceeded. So actually it was not aiming for a particular level of production, but the sky's the limit. Moreover, the plans were subject to repeated changes. Not only were they revised annually, but in each factory the workers and management were put in competition with each other to offer counterplans. Upping the ante. Management would set forward what the production target would be for this year of the Five Year Plan; workers would respond with a counterplan, upping the ante 20%.

["This was to quicken productivity?"]

Yes. Moreover, the Soviet planning apparatus had only a limited ability to plan: the extent of their knowledge of the economy as a whole was limited. Their understanding of the relationships between the different branches of industry, how they affected one another, was limited. The planning apparatus had only a limited ability to take account of such basic issues as transportation. No account was taken, and it would be difficult to put it on a quantitative scale, of many questions of consciousness and mass initiative; for instance, when large numbers of new workers are entering the work force, there is their training and what this would entail.

Given the very rapid tempo of industrialization, what resulted could not really be characterized as the abolition of planlessness. It was not infrequently closer to giving new insight into the term "anarchy of production."

One of the basic economic themes in Soviet life was scarcity, the scarcity of all resources. And this became *critical* when they started going about things at a rapid tempo. You couldn't get the supplies you needed. Some enterprising factory managers actually took to hijacking trains in order to get the raw materials to keep their factories running. And this was tolerated, as long as they made their quota. This was a show of initiative.

What had changed was the ground rules. Under NEP, preserving market relations with the peasantry required that the economy as a whole follow the basic ABCs of the market. The ruble had to be kept reasonably stable; hyperinflation of the type of the civil war era had to be avoided.

The state could not arbitrarily invest large amounts of money in industry and pay for it by printing more money; this was out under NEP. The state was bound by what its revenues were. Industry under NEP was strictly bound by what its revenues were. You could not run an industry in the red. You didn't necessarily have to turn a profit, but it could not be run in the red, for that would mean that the central bank runs in the red, as it has to keep paying your bills. In fact, early on in the NEP period, those factories which could not be put on at least a break-even footing were consolidated or closed down. How the state interacted with the economy was through the spheres of finance and price-setting.

With the launching of the First Five Year Plan, these ground rules went out the window. Factory output was now under the discipline, not of the ruble, but of the production quota. At the same time accounting, for all practical purposes, vanished for a few years. The central bank began running an unlimited line of credit for industry. For a period of about two years a factory manager could call on as large an amount of credit as he needed; there were no questions asked.

So it was not true that everything proceeded according to a plan, in an organized and careful way. What is true is they got away from the ground rules of the market, which they had followed under NEP. As long as they were under the discipline of the market in the classical way, they could not find the revenues for substantial industrial investment. They found some other way. And this permitted them a way out.

And they did succeed in carrying through industrialization at a rapid pace. What they achieved was fairly remarkable.

But being awash in a sea of red ink was not by itself enough to produce industrialization. More was needed. And one of the most essential things required for the launching of all-out industrialization was the mobilization of the workers.

Rise and decline of mass mobilization

The first years of the Five Year Plan were marked by a great mobilization. Hundreds of thousands of workers — mainly young, semi-skilled workers — were brought into the shock brigade movement.

Earlier, in 1926, the party leadership had attempted to launch a productivity drive in the usual way — it gave a directive to management. This lasted perhaps four months, and they had to take it back; it ended in a fiasco. They had thought, among other things, that if they could increase productivity in the already existing industry, they could reduce the prices of manufactured goods, have more exchange with the countryside, make more money from this turnover, and use it to finance the development of new industry. But in 1926 when they simply gave a call for improved productivity in industry, it fell on its face.

Now, the industrialization drive of the Five Year Plan

was much more far-reaching, much more ambitious. So launching it was possible only through the mass mobilization of the workers. Soviet workers were well aware of the implications of the backward state of industry, and a significant section responded boldly to the call to take up the struggle for production. They formed shock brigades; they experimented with the re-organization of production on the shop level. They'd hold a shop level conference and they would say, "Why are the machines set up this way? We should set up the machines this other way and have this other division of labor, and we'll be able to etc., etc., etc." And they would go ahead and experiment. Some of the shock brigaders, maybe 10 or 15% of them, formed communes and pooled their wages. Mass production conferences — shop conferences, and sometimes factory-wide conferences — took up organizing the process of production, and this was the form in which the counter-plans were developed and achieved. They would actually hold mass meetings to discuss the quotas and to propose alternative goals.

This process involved hundreds of thousands of workers. It was a mass movement. And it actually did have effect in industry. It also had some effect on the relationship between the party and the workers, in the sense that this section of workers was now drawing close to the party. By 1930, workers at the bench formed the highest proportion of party membership that they ever had. The highest percentage of factory workers in the party was in 1930, and it was because of the impact of the shock brigade movement.

But in 1930-31, with this mass mobilization well under way, policy turned in another direction. The engineers and managers, who had been under heavy pressure since 1927, were rehabilitated; particularly the engineers. Speeches were made saying the engineers used to be all out for sabotage, but had now decided to take up the cause of the revolution.

Hand in hand with this, a campaign against egalitarianism was launched. One aspect of this was denouncing the communes, which some sections of shock brigaders had formed, the pooling of wages, and so forth.

Another aspect of this was not only expanded wage gradations, but particularly the question of bonuses, which were chiefly for the managers and engineers.

At this same time increasing weight was given to labor discipline and work rules as the basic means of raising productivity. The chairmen of the production conferences had been appointed deputy managers of the plants. And that remained. But they remained as individuals; the production conference were gone.

["That (the production conference) is one of the things you referred to in the beginning?"]

Yes. And it was dissolved. Too many hours away from the bench was the idea.

On any one of these points, their reasoning could cite certain problems. But if you take these things as a whole, all coming within a few months of each other, a systematic

turn was taking place.

For the former shock brigaders however, or at least for a section of them, this did not necessarily mean disillusionment, because the rapid growth of industry demanded a new generation of managers and engineers. The size of industry was doubling, and moreover a new generation of technology was being introduced. The demand for all levels of supervision and for engineers is very great. And tens of thousands of former shock brigaders were promoted to management positions. It was a rapid process. One week you would be a machinist doing production work at the Putilov works, the next week you would be the manager at the biggest tractor factory in the Soviet Union. Only the tractor factory wasn't built yet, so your first job as manager was to build it. You had to head up a construction site of ten thousand workers, a thousand supervisors and a hundred engineers. This was taking place on a massive scale. That's an actual example; but most of it is promotion to lower level, shop floor supervisory positions. The former shock brigaders became the new foremen.

At the same time, thousands more were recruited to go to the polytechnic schools to qualify as engineers. In the course of time better than a hundred thousand workers, basically all shock brigaders, went to the university and come out as engineers.

Growth of the state apparatus

During this time there was also the rise and decline of a movement against bureaucracy.

Around 1928 a campaign against bureaucracy was spearheaded by the Young Communist League. It was targeted against public officials accused of obstructing party and Soviet policy and of neglecting the needs of the masses. At times, groups of youths would invade local Soviet offices and denounce the officials there and point out who the obstructionists were, demand they be thrown out on the spot, and so forth. It bore some resemblance to certain episodes of the Cultural Revolution in China.

This was accompanied by cutting back the size of the government apparatus. And, at this time, in connection with this campaign, a minor reduction was actually made in the total size of the apparatus.

But this change did not last. Within a few years the size of Soviet officialdom had swelled. What had changed was its distribution, what departments they were in. Many older departments didn't grow at all, or got smaller, while the ministry for heavy industry doubled every year, and by the end of the decade it had been divided into fourteen separate ministries: a ministry for textiles, a ministry for metals, a ministry for chemicals, etc. Similar developments took place with respect to the ministries concerned with agriculture, and a few years later with ministries concerned with domestic, internal trade. This reflected the development of a huge bureaucracy.

["I'm sorry, I didn't follow this. You say in 1928 they started a movement against bureaucracy?"]

Right.

[*"The size of the government starts getting smaller?"*]

Yes. They cut back the total payroll a few percent. It's hard to say, because their figures are incomplete.

[*"But anyway, in 1928-30, it gets smaller with the movement against bureaucracy, and then that's stopped."*]

Right. Now even at this time, 1928, the key economic ministries are hiring hand over fist. But they were so small at first, that it didn't make a dent in the total figures until a few years later.

Betting on the socialist intelligentsia

Officials were hired for the Soviet ministries. Together with the industrial managers and engineers they constituted the most important sections of what came to be called the "socialist intelligentsia".

What they called the "socialist intelligentsia" did not refer to poets and artists. Technically it did; anyone who was not in production work was part of the "socialist intelligentsia." But the statements about the socialist intelligentsia weren't that concerned at this point in history with professors and poets. Mostly they're interested in engineers and managers and state officials, and this is who they orient themselves towards.

In fact the term gets used at two levels. At certain times all office workers are categorized as socialist intelligentsia, because they're not working in industrial production. But what's actually the core of the matter? When they talk about the "two friendly classes and a stratum," they're not saying "now we've trained hundreds of thousands of poets from the ranks of the workers"; they're talking engineers and managers and state officials.

From the ranks of the shock brigaders hundreds of thousands of workers were recruited and formed as this stratum called the "socialist intelligentsia." I want to be a little bit careful about the characterization, because it's complicated. It's not that there weren't any engineers and managers before. But in some regard they're training this stratum anew, a stratum the state can rely upon.

At the time the Five Year Plan was launched, virtually all the engineers were from the old society. There were perhaps two engineers in the party. A million party members, and two engineers. The engineers were hostile to Soviet power. From that standpoint it made a tremendous difference to send 150,000 loyal workers to engineering school.

But what happens is they get formed as a stratum with the same — actually with greater — privileges than the previous engineers. Not only did they receive the privileges and perks of a higher standard of living, but they're party members. And as the decade goes on, they are entrusted with more and more authority and have more and more to say about what takes place in the economy.

So the "socialist intelligentsia" becomes a new stratum, or at least a stratum in a certain way different from the technical, managerial, and official strata which they had be-

fore. And by the latter 1930s the "socialist intelligentsia" was placed formally on a par with the working class. In practice it was another matter. Being part of the "socialist intelligentsia" meant having certain special privileges and perks and so forth. Nominally workers and engineers were on a par in terms of recruitment to party membership; actually engineers had better access. Nominally they were at par in terms of their kids' chance to go into higher education; but in practice there was better access for the "socialist intelligentsia."

This formation of this stratum did not take place all at once. The first wave of shock-brigaders sent to engineering school, for example, did not matriculate until about 1934. The great purges of 1936/37 took a heavy toll among older economic managers, and brought promotions for many individuals coming from this new wave; and this undoubtedly played some role in the formation of this stratum. These purges also reflect the fact that certain very palpable tensions continued to exist between the state and the economic managers. When they're being fired by the thousands upon thousands, there has to be some tension.

The formation of this stratum and its rise in status passes through a number of stages over quite a few years. By the time we reach modern history we find, prominent among the leaders of party and state, names from the first wave of recruits to the polytechnic, such as Khrushchev, Kosygin and Brezhnev. But while this process unfolded over time, it appears that from about 1930 onward the party leadership was betting on the cultivation of a loyal stratum of economic managers.

Assessing the phases of the First Five Year Plan

Now to all appearances, there is an early phase in the First Five Year Plan, roughly 1927-29, in which the policies are markedly different both from what went before and what followed. This is a point which marks a break with the NEP policies in the past, and where there hasn't yet been the turn of 1930 — mass mobilization of workers is taking place. This phase of the First Five Year Plan has a number of features which might indicate revolutionary efforts, but it's hard to draw a conclusion or give a characterization at this time, given the close connection between this phase and what followed, as they're not entirely separable.

Two years ago we said the First Five Year Plan had its problems, but you can see there was an attempt to be revolutionary, an effort to follow a class line, and so forth. Now we've looked at it more closely. Right in this period, from 1930 onwards, there is a turn, where they're doing nothing of the sort. One can't just say, well, in 1928-29 they were trying to follow a class line and get mobilized, because there's a question of what happened to this policy. How come they were not doing this in 1926, and they were not doing this in 1930, but they were doing it in between? We don't know yet.

Collectivization

Now I'd like to turn to the question of collectivization.

The proletariat in Russia succeeded in seizing and retaining power by forming an alliance with the peasantry based upon conceding to the agrarian program of the latter. The agrarian program of the October Revolution was — whatever the peasants wanted it to be; that was the deal. This was at the cost of a setback in agriculture. Many of the big capitalist estates were broken up and returned to petty production, and it was a setback from the standpoint of production.

But at this price was won a torrential peasant movement which broke the back of feudalism. And this movement swiftly gave rise to an intensification of class struggle in the villages. By 1918 the countryside was swept by a poor peasant movement which gained the upper hand, largely leveled the rich peasants, and took command of the village Soviets. This gave the proletariat an organized ally in the countryside.

The Bolsheviks essentially had not been in the countryside at the time of the revolution. All they could do was give a call to the peasants: seize the land. But seizing the land not only broke the back of feudalism but then gave rise to the class struggle in the village over who gets it — between poor peasant and rich. It gave rise to an organized poor peasant movement, which swept through the countryside, and among other things won the rural Soviet elections and took over the village Soviets.

So at the time it seemed that the revolution was in a strong position in the countryside.

But the impact of the civil war, devastation, the emergency appropriations, and famine halted this process. And in the NEP period the village Soviets receded, while the traditional peasant commune, called in some of our speeches the "mir" [the traditional village community with its periodic redistribution of the land and collective responsibilities—ed.] and in others the "skhod" [the peasant assembly of the mir—ed.], became the center of gravity in the village. Meanwhile, the victories of the poor peasants' movement had made everyone more or less a middle peasant. They had taken away land and implements from the rich peasants, giving them to the poor peasants; obviously the process was not even, and it was not thorough, but to a certain extent everybody at this point was a middle peasant. So for the country to function, for the Soviet government to retain power, an accord with the middle peasant was required.

That accord was, of course, the NEP. The state would permit the resurgence of the market, which had disappeared under war communism; it would give leeway to petty proprietorship. The peasant, for his side of the deal, would sell his grain to the state. Implicit in this compromise was that the peasant would claim a larger share of the grain than he did before October; a bigger share of the grain would stay in the countryside, less would go to the cities.

In practice, the NEP accord proved fragile. This stem-

med from the nature of NEP, i.e., that it was a truce between two different systems of production. It seems that once the big owners of land and industry had been expropriated, bit by bit what came to the fore was a contradiction with petty proprietorship. This meant that NEP was inherently unstable; it meant that sooner or later it was going to give way, but not necessarily at the time nor in the way in which it did.

Now the development of the contradiction with petty proprietorship does not necessarily, when the proletariat is holding power, take on the form of bloody clashes or a confrontation with the peasantry as a whole. In fact, the extent that it does, is probably a sign of the weakness of the proletariat. The actual battleground for this war is the village itself; it is to be found in the bitter struggle between the poor and the rich in the village. Petty proprietorship cannot stand; it disintegrates; the ranks of the middle peasants begin to disintegrate and differentiate between rich and poor. The class struggle ensues. The alternative to having a fight between the proletariat and the peasant over petty production is a development inside the village, the class struggle between the poor peasant and the rich peasant, which opens up the possibility of winning over the rural majority and using this momentum to transform the countryside.

The collectivization of agriculture, based upon the voluntary participation of a section of the peasantry, can provide a path to such a rural transformation. Collective relations are not socialist relations and ought not be confused with them. But under the dictatorship of the proletariat they can be an alternative to petty proprietorship, an alternative which can provide a framework for the introduction of modern, large-scale cultivation and for breaking down rural isolation and idiocy, and which can provide a support within agriculture for the development of industry.

In the late 1920s the CPSU did undertake the collectivization of agriculture, and this did lay the foundation for rural social transformation. But questions must be raised about the way in which this was achieved and the type of transformation that resulted.

At the onset of the industrialization drive the Soviet government made sweeping changes in the relationship of prices and wages, reducing the prices of both agricultural and manufactured goods, thereby in effect raising real wages. A scarcity of consumer goods resulted — the workers bought everything up. The NEP relations with the peasantry would have been under pressure at this point in any event because of the increased state revenues going into industrial investment. But the monkeying around with the price structure tipped the scales decisively, and in the next harvest the peasantry did not bring its grain to market. There was wholesale hoarding of the grain. And this became known as the "second scissors crisis."

["What year was this?"]

October-November of '27 is when they decide that it's a crisis.

What had actually been developing for several years is that slowly, under the covers, class differentiation had been developing in the countryside. A richer section of the peasantry emerged, who had more possibility to hoard their grain; they didn't have to bring it to market the minute they harvested it. They could hang onto it. And what they had discovered about the pricing policy of the Soviet government showed them that what to do was: hold back the grain at the fall harvest and wait for spring. Every summer grain prices would be reduced. Every fall the state grain monopoly would purchase what it could at the reduced prices. By spring they would have to up the offer because they were short.

This had been developing over several years. This time the shortfall in grain was severe.

Now, hoarding is inherent in rural petty proprietorship. Any peasant who can hoard will hoard. It's part of the process, and Lenin discusses this. On one side the peasant is a toiler, and on the other side he's a petty proprietor. Hoarding comes with the territory. But the extent of the hoarding which took place at this point marked the reemergence of a rich peasant stratum. Adding insult to injury was the fact that this new rich peasant stratum — the emerging kulaks — were able to hoard the grain efficiently, in part because they now had use of the apparatus of the cooperative movement. These were not production coops, but purchasing and marketing coops. Nevertheless here the cooperative movement, which had been envisioned as a key means toward rural transformation, was at least to some extent used for hoarding.

Essentially the turn to all-out industrialization led right away to a initial breakdown in market relations with the peasantry. This had happened before, and when it happened before the state retreated; it rolled back prices and wages, it cut back their plans for investment, etc.

This time it did not. This time, rather than retreat from the industrialization drive, the party and state leadership turned instead to emergency measures of grain appropriation similar to the days of war communism. Essentially they sent hundreds of thousands of grain workers to the countryside to collect the grain and set quotas for each village.

Now this in turn, by the time of the next harvest, led to a complete breakdown in exchange with the countryside. The whole thing unraveled.

It's possible that, at this point, the idea was, well, we'll get through one or two harvests with emergency appropriations, and then we'll be in a position where we can return to market relations. It's not clear what the thinking was. But what happened was, once they turned to emergency measures, the market vanished, and the emergency measures of appropriation were the only means they had of collecting grain.

It's difficult to sustain emergency measures indefinitely. Under these conditions the idea of collectivization, which has already been posed in the party, gained a new urgency.

The emergency measures for grain appropriation had been combined with a campaign against the kulak. It was

called the "Siberian Urals method." They would go into a village, call a village-wide meeting, give a speech denouncing the kulaks, about the importance of giving the grain to the cities, and then call upon the poorer peasants to join them in a house-to-house search of the kulaks' properties looking for grain stores. The deal was that the poor peasants, the first time around, actually got a percentage of what was confiscated. And the first time the confiscations were enormously successful. Thereafter they dropped quite a bit.

These types of measures became closely connected with collectivization. For a few weeks in the fall and for a few weeks in the spring, there was large-scale party presence in the countryside, with armed detachments going around carrying out the grain collection. This seemed like a perfect opportunity to carry out collectivization, as long as one was in the village anyway.

Moreover, the campaign against the kulaks was carried to the point of confiscation: their land, their animals, and their implements were confiscated and, as collective farms were formed, were placed at the disposal of the collective farms. This had a practical side, in that it meant the collective farms had a head-start on life. It means they had a little more land, a few more implements, a few more animals at their disposal. Moreover, not only were kulak properties confiscated, all their property — they weren't just leveled, in the case of a large section of the kulaks everything was simply taken — but they were expelled from the village. Some were expelled to outlying areas, still more were transported to virgin lands east of the Urals which they would then colonize, but hundreds of thousands ended up in labor camps under the supervision of the political police. And in fact at this point the political police became the second largest employer of labor, the largest being the ministry of industry, but after this comes the labor camps.

[*"How nasty were these camps?"*]

It was not summer camp, but the conditions actually varied, and many people were actually in there for a limited period of time. There are many cases which can be cited where someone is denounced as a kulak, is sent to a labor camp for reeducation, while working at a labor camp building roads receives a citation and a 50-ruble prize for the quality of his work, and upon his discharge from the camp two years later gets a job reference and lands a job. For a section it was like that. But the conditions were difficult. And a good deal of the work being done was construction work, roads and canals including massive canal projects, in which the conditions had to have been fairly harsh. When digging by hand what's going to become a sea canal, the conditions are going to be pretty tough.

By the time the first Five Year Plan was adopted, it made a provision for collectivization. It called for the collectivization of 20-25% of the countryside, depending on whether you're counting the amount of land or the amount of production or the amount of households, by the end of the Five Year Plan. In fact that goal, the 20-25% level, was achieved by late 1929.

At the same time it became evident that industrialization was running into difficulty. One of the methods of encouraging collectivization is the state gives certain leeway to the collective farms to ensure that they're more successful than petty proprietorship, such as tax breaks, and certain other preferential treatment. By late '29 they were discovering that they did not have the resources available to do this. And at this point they gave a call for all-out collectivization. Within a matter of weeks, the number of collectivized households doubled; it went up from one-fourth to one-half the rural population.

Severe crisis ensued. By March, 1930 the Central Committee called a retreat. This was Stalin's "Dizzy With Success" letter which blamed the excesses on the party rank and file.

["The time frame for going from 25% collectivization to 50%?"]

Between November of 1929 and February of 1930.

["They decide they don't have the resources to give incentives to collective farms, and then ..."]

Right. Voluntary collectivization works, because it appeals not only to the peasants' gravitation toward the working class, but also appealing to their self-interest. On a collective farm they can produce more grain for the cities and at the same time live better themselves. But it's hard getting it going. These are peasants with an average of two years of schooling, and organizing a modern farm is not going to be so easy. So how were they going to ensure, if 25% of the peasants are collectivized and 75% are petty proprietors, which was going to be the trend of the future? Interest-free loans can be given to the collective farms. Taxes can be abolished on the collective farms, or reduced or waived for a few years. And so on.

["I understand that, but if they couldn't maintain those incentives with 25%, why did they go ahead?"]

Because they couldn't guarantee that a collective farm system organized on a voluntary basis could compete with petty proprietorship.

["In other words, they didn't offer those same incentives. But if they didn't have the resources to offer these incentives at 25%, how can they possibly offer the same incentives at 50%?"]

Because they couldn't maintain them at 25%, they said, well, there is one alternative, which is if there's no petty proprietorship and nobody has a choice, it's not a problem.

["So they withdrew the incentives that they had previously offered?"]

Things were so confusing that nobody knew exactly what was being offered or not. The way this was carried out was remarkable. The spring planting in 1930 took place without the peasants in the collective farms knowing how they were going to receive remuneration. There was no debate. The traditional peasant method in the village commune was that the land was distributed according to the number of eaters in each household. So some thought shares in the crop should be distributed on that basis. The more orthodox view coming from the cities was that it should be distrib-

uted according to how many days labor each individual did. But that wasn't the only view. The secretary responsible for collectivization, the minister for agriculture, who was himself a former steel worker, thought everyone should go over to a wage system. Now, where the collective farms were supposed to get the money to pay wages he did not explain. But that was his view. And every month they would do another draft of model statutes for the collective farms, which would say things like, the collective farms should pay no more than 50% of remuneration in the form of wages prior to the harvest, at least half the payments should be held back — they had no money!

What actually happened in the first year is that part of the dropout from the collective farms — once they said anybody out who wants to can get out, and half got out — were not people who wanted to drop out. They were the agricultural laborers, people with no land who were attracted to the collective farms, and they joined them in November and discovered they weren't going to get fed until next November. Large numbers of them had to leave. It was messy. It was not well organized. But it also has to be taken into account, that when major social movements are launched, all kinds of strange things do happen. There's no part of history worth examining that doesn't look awfully strange once you look at it closely.

They had no document saying this is how they were going to do it. But it's the same plenum of the Central Committee which discusses the crisis of industrialization which also gives a call for all-out collectivization. It seems that there is a connection, and that this is the underlying thing.

In any event, collectivization went far beyond what the peasantry could sustain. They had to retreat. They retreated for a year, had good weather and an exceptional harvest, and once they had this, a more orderly attempt was made to go forward from 25% to 50% collectivization, and they reached it by the end of 1931.

On paper this was a great success, but the fact of the matter is that the collective farm system had grown up rapidly and remained highly disorganized and disoriented.

At the same time, the state was becoming more and more rigid about the grain quotas for the collective farms. This was for two interrelated reasons.

The first was that they had hired on far more workers in the course of industrialization than they had expected. The original plan in the Five Year Plan was not to increase the payroll that much, but to increase the productivity of the workers. Yet by 1931 they had run out of unemployed to hire on. They had hired on everybody. They were routinely hiring two workers for every job, because of high labor turnover, because they were hiring ex-peasants who had no experience in industrial work, etc. This increased the demand for grain.

The other thing that happened during this period was that Japan invaded Manchuria, and there was a serious question whether they were going to move south deeper into China or whether they were going to move into

Siberia. Had the Japanese moved into Siberia, the Siberian harvest would have been lost.

So they went on an emergency appropriation campaign, taking every bit of grain from the countryside except for the seed grain, and sometimes taking the seed grain too. The state went in for massive hoarding.

At the same time, they were transferring some 500,000 troops to Siberia in preparation for a Japanese invasion.

All these things came to a head. In some areas there was not enough seed grain for the next planting. A crop failure resulted. In other areas the peasants just wouldn't plant and wouldn't harvest. In effect they were on strike. At this point the peasants turned very heavily toward working their private plots. And a big fight was taking place between the state and the peasants as to whether there would be private plots and how large they would be.

Violation of the voluntary principle

A major social experiment like this is not going to have a smooth course, even at best. There are going to be setbacks. But many of the problems here seem to be linked to the violation of the principle of the voluntary character of collectivization and to the wide use of repressive measures. This is not simply a matter of not stepping on anyone's toes; it's the issue that collectivization has to be based upon the concrete situation in village life.

There's no doubt that a social base did exist for collectivization. In the Ukraine, throughout the 1920s, a collective farm movement had persisted. And it was composed principally of poor peasants. At that time the Ukraine had the most capitalist development in agriculture in the country. It had the bitterest class struggle in the countryside. And this shows that when the development reaches a certain point, the poor peasants and a section of the middle peasants are interested in collectivization as a way out.

The situation in the Ukrainian countryside may have been somewhat more advanced than elsewhere. But class differentiation was taking place; it seems reasonable to assume that there was some social base for collectivization. Moreover, when they called a retreat in collectivization, half of those in the collective farms chose to remain; there may be various factors involved, but certainly some peasants wanted collectivization.

The collective farm system eventually stabilized on the basis of a compromise between the collective farm and petty production. Grain production would be collectivized, but the peasant would have his private plot as well. And the collective farm did become the foundation of other changes in the countryside. Universal education was introduced in the countryside. A system of medical clinics was introduced in the countryside. And so forth.

But the price that was paid was very dear. The distorted way in which collectivization was achieved seems to have had a wrenching effect on the entire society. The wide-scale use of police methods to deal with social issues was set as a standard for the future. And a large part of

the peasantry, while it may have adjusted to collectivization, definitely was not won to the side of the party and state.

Aftermath of the Civil War

I want to turn now to some points regarding earlier history.

The role of the working class in the October revolution was not just an abstraction. It was realized through the role of the Red Militia, the factory committee movement, the workers' Soviets, and the Bolshevik Party itself. Through these means the class conscious workers, with the direct backing of the overwhelming majority of the class, seized and exercised power in the months and years following the revolution. The participation of masses of workers in political affairs blossomed, and a large section of urban toilers were drawn close to the Party. As I've mentioned, the unfolding of the poor peasants' movement in the villages gave the proletariat an organized rural ally as well. And, I should mention as well the soldiers' soviets, which provided a forum for political participation for what, essentially, was at that time the most conscious section of the peasantry.

These achievements were dealt a grave blow in the Civil War. Fourteen reactionary armies were fielded by Russian reaction and the major imperialist powers in a bitter war against the revolution. They marched across Russia leaving death and destruction in their wake. At the height of the war they occupied the major grain-producing regions and cut off the flow of foodstuffs to the cities.

The working class responded heroically. Entire factory committees and trade unions enlisted en masse. The great majority of class conscious workers ended up in the ranks of the army, or in the Cheka, or in administrative work.

A consequence of this was the decline of many of the forms associated with the October revolution. It's hard to maintain the factory committee when the entire factory committee is enlisted in the army to go fight. So to a certain extent you now have the class conscious proletariat organized as an army.

Reaction proved unable to crush the October Revolution militarily. But it dealt it a severe blow. Together with death and destruction, it also brought about economic collapse. In fact, economic collapse had been threatening from 1917, that's one of the reasons the revolution took place. But the possibility of forestalling it disappeared with the onset of the civil war.

With the White armies occupying the grain-producing areas and with the collapse of internal trade, the Soviet government resorted to the emergency appropriation of grain from the peasantry in the areas it could reach. The peasants were left with only enough grain to survive, and sometimes not even that. Even at that, the urban population remained only a step away from starvation.

The devastation of the Civil War, the emergency appropriation of grain, the collapse of internal trade, and conscription brought the peasantry to hunger, exhaustion

and the brink of rebellion. The poor peasants' movement and the village Soviets had all but collapsed. And the alliance of the working class with the peasantry was seriously weakened.

The cities were deeply affected too. The Russian proletariat was numerically a small part of the Russian population, but it was obliged to shoulder the main weight of the defense. The majority of party members, the factory committee movement, and other class conscious workers had gone to the front. Industry ground to a near standstill. At the time of the October Revolution, the economic crisis was such that industrial output had fallen to about 50% of its prewar level. During the civil war, it fell to 20 or 25%.

Complicating matters further, the workers remaining in the factories were no longer the veterans of the factory committee movement and the October Revolution; these had gone to the front, and their places had been taken by elements drawn from a variety of social backgrounds, including peasants who had been displaced by the war. The masses in the cities were hungry and exhausted, and a part of them had lost confidence in the Party and in the Soviet government.

By the time of the Kronstadt rebellion in March 1921, many local peasant revolts were brewing. The books say things like that there were over 200 local peasant revolts, but what a local peasant revolt is and how much it means varied a lot from case to case. But it was a sign that there was certain discontent brewing in a fairly large section of the peasantry. Then, in the weeks before Kronstadt, mass anti-Bolshevik demonstrations had taken place in Petrograd. In fact that's how the plotters in Kronstadt got the idea and why they thought they could pull something off. They thought that the situation would be ripe. Actually this was a mis-estimate. Nonetheless the fact of mass demonstrations taking place in Kronstadt under a series of slogans including "for Soviets without Bolsheviks" indicated the crisis confronting the party.

The crisis in policy

Defeating the counterrevolution in the civil war required an all-out mobilization. And not only the party, but to a considerable extent, the entire society had been placed under military or near-military discipline. Harsh measures were frequently required, and they were carried out swiftly, without regard for the niceties of preparing public opinion which might be expected in more peaceful times. Many of these harsh methods were necessitated by the conditions of the time; if you're at war, you don't have time to dot the i's and cross the t's, you take whatever measures are necessary. You go ahead and you don't take the time to prepare the public opinion, etc., you go ahead and do it. It also means you don't have a lot of time for sitting around thinking, well here we must act swiftly and decisively, but here we have leeway. So the measures which had to be taken during this period were fairly harsh, and this is just a fact of life.

Along with these conditions there are probably going to be some excesses, and there is also a tendency to romanticize the emergency measures and the military way of doing things, and to portray this as a rapid advance toward socialism. This was the more so, given that many of the measures that were taken were popular among the class conscious workers. Historically, to the working class, money signifies slavery. The idea of somehow abolishing money goes way back. It didn't begin with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*; that just put the idea on a scientific footing. So, when the workers saw hyper-inflation and the disappearance of the ruble, at least a section of the class conscious workers said, "Fine. Let's abolish money." Speculation was outlawed. Speculators could be taken out and shot, in theory at least.

But what is speculation? Someone goes to the countryside, buys a bag of grain, brings it back to the city to sell it at a higher price. This was speculation, but there's a certain problem here. The problem is, the market is speculation. The market brings middlemen, and what's a middleman but a speculator? Outlaw all speculation, and right there you're abolishing the market, which is great, but what do you have to replace it with? Certain problems may indeed have resulted from this. But from the standpoint of many class conscious workers, "Yea, shoot the speculators. Yea!" As far as many class conscious workers were concerned, this was exactly what to do, and this was marching toward socialism.

This notwithstanding, all these measures taken as a whole — the militarization, the emergency grain appropriation, the other emergency political and economic measures — weighed heavily upon the mass of toilers. The class conscious workers may have liked them, but for the toilers as a whole, they proved to be more of a burden than they could sustain. Yet the tendency to romanticize this approach may have encouraged a certain blindspot toward the problems and dangers which accompanied these methods.

And it's notable that numbers of the emergency measures which were taken, were not eased when the end of the civil war was in sight. They were not eased when it was a foregone conclusion that the revolution was going to defeat the counterrevolution. It was only when the crisis became severe, when rebellions were breaking out and so forth, that attempts were made to get away from this emergency way of doing things. So in fact it seems to have had a certain grip on the party.

Ebb of the revolutionary tide

Now a prominent feature of the high tide of the revolution after October was the awakening of a large section of the toiling masses to public affairs. It may have been easy at this time to imagine that this would become a permanent feature of the revolution, that there would always be thousands and thousands of workers every week turning out for mass assemblies to debate, and this is the

way it would be from now on, only maybe it would get bigger.

But revolutionary high tides tend to be followed by revolutionary ebbs. It doesn't seem that history works this way, that once you finally get state power, the rules change and there'll never be an ebb. It doesn't really seem reasonable, and you are going to see ebbs in which the revolutionary fervor dampens somewhat and in which at least some sections of the masses withdraw into everyday life.

This does not necessarily mean a complete end to mass participation in public affairs. But the phenomenon will diminish. And the party will then be faced with the question of how to cope with a more normal situation, at the same time preserving the essence of the revolution and working for the day when the next tide comes and there is a new surge of even wider mass participation in public affairs.

In Soviet Russia this ebb did take place, and it took place against the background of war communism. And the extreme exhaustion of the masses made for a particularly steep ebb. This was all the more so because of the fate during the civil war of the forms which had been opened up during the revolution. A lot of them were gone or had weakened. The factory committee movement had, basically, been wiped out by the historical circumstances. The village soviets had been decimated. And such circumstances too became a contributing factor to the steep ebb of the revolutionary tide.

The class conscious proletariat had not ceased to exist — just the form in which it was organized was a little different, basically it was the party and the army to a large extent. But this meant that mass mobilization for the war effort had necessarily taken most party members and a whole section of the class conscious workers out of their spheres. A guy who used to be at the Putilov works, working among thousands and thousands of other workers there, may now be off in Siberia someplace, where he doesn't know anybody. This was part of the conditions of the aftermath of such a war.

Relations between the party and the masses

Under these conditions, with the aftermath of the civil war, with a certain crisis in party policy, and with the ebb of the revolutionary tide, the relationship of the party with the masses emerged as an important problem which did not readily disappear. The party appears at times to have had some recognition of this problem and to have made some efforts in this direction. But this was not consistent, and in practice was honored more in the breach than in the observance.

At one time, a series of conferences of non-party toilers was launched. At another, a campaign to revitalize the Soviets. But the main place was given to rebuilding the trade unions as the main link between the party and the masses. In fact, however, there is little evidence the trade unions succeeded in playing such a role during the 1920s.

And as the 1920s progressed, questions of mass mobilization and mass participation appear to have received diminishing attention until the launching of the shock brigade movement toward the end of the decade.

These problems had practical implications. So long as the party was in power it was obliged to govern society. At the end of war communism this meant hammering out compromises with other class forces, notably the peasantry and the remains of the old bureaucracy. To the extent that the party's ties with the masses suffered weaknesses, the party was then entering into these arrangements on something less than a secure footing. And as the decade moves on into the 20s, these problems then become a backdrop to further developments such as the unfolding of the inner-party debate, and the eventual launching of the industrialization drive.

These are the points I wanted to make regarding the early history.

The October Revolution and its place in history

What attitude do we take toward this?

The attitude of Marx and Engels toward the Paris Commune is instructive.

Marx and Engels praised the Commune in the highest possible terms, and drew from its brief experience — only ten weeks — valuable lessons about the socialist revolution. Yet, when we look at the Commune in detail, it is evident that had it lived beyond its 70-some-odd days, it would have soon been in crisis.

The Paris Commune was something of an historical anomaly. It wasn't a time of European-wide upsurge; there was simply a situation in France which gave the proletariat a taste of what the future would be. Paris at that time was largely cut off from the countryside and from the other French cities. The Parisian toilers in that day were concentrated in light industry and were much less organized than, say, the proletariat of Russia a few decades later. By any standards, the objective conditions under which the Commune arose were less than favorable to the proletariat being able to retain power.

Now the leaders of the communards were majority Blanquist, minority Proudhonist. They were not Marxists, except for a few individuals. They subscribed to other trends, and not infrequently the policies of the Commune reflected the weaknesses of these trends. The Central Committee brought to power by the insurrection surrendered power to the Commune too soon; serious steps were not taken to crush the counterrevolution; the Communards were paralyzed by awe in the face of the power of the banks; and their appeal to the peasantry was acutely weak.

Now, for all of this, the memory of the Commune will nonetheless long be honored.

By these standards the October Revolution went very far indeed. The October Revolution was the product of an entire historical era. It was not Paris, which at that time

was a town of a few hundred thousand. It took place in a country of 100-150 million.

It was the doing of a millions-strong industrial working class; it held power not for weeks, but for years. And we can do this study because the October Revolution went far enough to get into trouble. There's much more than this. They actually held power for years, and for years spent time grappling with the practical problem of organizing working class rule. And dealt as well with the question of winning the peasantry, or a section of the peasantry, as an ally.

It was led by revolutionary Marxists organized into a political party. And above all, the October Revolution left an indelible impression on world history. Most of the twentieth century has centered around the fact of the October Revolution.

The place of the October Revolution in history, as a great revolution of the working class, is secure.

The need to de-mythicize the process of revolution

However, the October Revolution, and the revolutionary process in general, have been shrouded in mythology. And if we are going to draw the lessons of this history, we need to give concrete meaning to the big, awe-inspiring phrases that you can't get a handle on. What does it mean to

smash up the old state machine? What is the slogan of "Soviet Power"? What do these things signify?

We take up this task because we believe the lessons of this experience are still relevant. Today's world is a different place from that of 1917, and it would be foolish for anyone to imagine that they are going to be able to make revolution by imitating or doing a rerun of the tactics of the October Revolution. But the laws of history, and the fundamental questions which face us, have not changed.

We are putting a lot of effort into our study of this history. And we are paying a lot of attention to our methods of study. But the correctness of our methods of study, of the quality of the conclusions we come to — the documents we write in summing it up etc. — none of this is going to be the test of the validity of the conclusions which we arrive at. They are going to be put to the test by the next generation of the proletarian revolution. And after the professors and the politicians and the press have a hundred times proclaimed that the revolution is dead, and that Marxism is dead, the revolution is going to burst forth with a magnitude of strength not before seen. It's going to reach greater heights than before, and part of the reason it's going to reach greater heights than before, is it's going to be able to stand on the shoulders of the October Revolution, just as the October Revolution stood on the shoulders of the revolutions of the 19th century. □

Socialism in the modern world

Continued from the front page

become the first priority of economic management decisions, decisions implemented through the planned, all-round development of the economy, education, culture and sciences. And in this way, technology will be transformed from a force that is in fact, out of (social) control, to a force that is harnessed by society as a whole; from a force that ravages the earth's resources, to one that can repair the environment and go on to protect and enhance it.

The 19th century theory of Marx and Engels is an indispensable guide to contemporary socialist thought. Rather than being anachronistic, it is brilliant insight and foresight concerning the development of modern capitalism, and is very relevant to the late 20th and early 21st century.

Abolition of class distinctions.

A complete socialist society is not instituted overnight, the day after the workers' seizure of political power. It takes a period of transition away from the mess inherited from the old society. And of course there are many complex issues involved in such an epoch-making transformation. But let us leave this problem aside for now. Socialism fundamentally means the abolition of class distinctions in society. (It does not mean "government ownership" nor "state ownership", the definition that is commonly promoted by the bourgeois columnists. If this were so, the Post Office and Amtrak would have to be considered socialist.)

Capitalism, unlike previous social systems, is driven to ceaselessly revolutionize the productive forces of society. The scientific understanding of nature is advanced in order to apply it to the production of commodities in the relentless pursuit of yet more profits and capital, and again more commodities.

(Today however, one major factor hindering technological advance is the existence of monopolies in virtually every sphere of the economy. Competition between many small enterprises is a thing of the past. Monopolies have an inherent tendency toward stagnation, toward "resting on their laurels" (their cornering of the market). But while today competition is reduced, it is not eliminated, especially on a world scale. Those concerns that choose to "take it easy" find themselves losing market share eventually. Many industries in the U.S. are a case in point.)

The constant revolutionizing of technology, creates the technical conditions that turn the existence of a separate administrating and exploiting class into an unnecessary anachronism, in fact a positive hindrance to social and economic advance. And as history demonstrates, obsolete social organizations, and social classes that interfere with the progress of the productive forces, are inevitably overthrown and superseded. Central to this conception of

the inevitable future abolition of classes, is the analysis of the origin and development of class divisions historically.

The first human societies were subsistence economies marked by a scarcity of products. More than this, they were too backward to produce a surplus, over and above what was needed to satisfy the bare necessities of life. Under these conditions no exploiting class could exist. No one could live off the labor of others.

With the development of technique, of productivity, a small surplus began to be engendered, over and above the requirements of the individual laborer. Now there emerged the possibility for an administrative, exploiting class to emerge, separate from direct production, living off this surplus. And it did emerge. And it was a superior form of production to the previous classless society, or else it wouldn't have defeated and supplanted it. The higher technique of production that produced a surplus also required a higher level of conscious management that could be provided only by people not totally burdened with manual labor.

So this class division was not just possible, but necessary. As long as human labor productivity was capable of producing only a small surplus, it was possible only for a small privileged elite to be freed from the burden of productive labor and to be able to devote themselves to economic administration, and to state and cultural matters. That this was accompanied by cruel injustice of every description against the laborers does not eliminate its historical economic justification.

After several thousand years of evolution of class society, capitalism emerges. In revolutionizing the productive forces, it eliminates the scarcity of products of former times. Capitalism creates the possibility of abundance, of enough goods for all the basic needs and a full life, and much more beyond this. And in doing so, capitalism creates a situation that demands, as a necessity, not a pipedream or a utopia, an end to this class division between the productive laborers and those who manage their exploitation.

Capitalism creates: The technological possibility for all to lead a full life with all physical and social needs met; that these basic needs can be met with a brief workday: not 8, not even 4, but perhaps 2 hours, once socialism is thoroughly organized.

This results in freeing up time to pursue varied activities, interests and pleasures, and to acquire wide, varied knowledge.

Capitalism creates: the technical capacity to reduce labor that is mere drudgery to a minimum. And with the parceling out of this ever-reduced remaining drudgery to everyone, no one need be stultified by arduous, backbreaking, boring work. In other words, the capacity now exists to eliminate people being confined to jobs that only stunt and destroy the human personality.

Sufficient abundance is now within reach such that society can easily fund childcare, schools and children's recreation that are exciting and fulfilling, beyond our wildest imagination. And with work hours reduced, a wide variety of adult educational and cultural activities become

possible.

And with this increase of the general educational and scientific level of the population, people need not be pigeon-holed and chained to one "occupation" their whole life. Frequent rotation of jobs will not only alleviate boredom but will result in people endlessly learning more about nature and society as they tackle new tasks. Laboring people can develop an all-round knowledge and personality. Blue collar and white collar work is merged, as tasks requiring exclusively manual labor are reduced, and mental and manual labor are integrated. All of this in turn spurs big advances in all scientific, technical and other fields. Finally, such laboring people have utterly no need for a separate class of bosses and managers to tell them what to do, and to rip them off royally in the bargain.

The abolition of class distinctions is not simply possible, but necessary.

Modern technology increasingly demands laboring people who have acquired a level of knowledge that only such a socialist organization of society can bring forth. The general division and separation of theory and practice in society has reached the point that it impedes both.

A planned, socialist economy requires a very high level of mass consciousness to succeed. Such a planned economy cannot be "technocracy" run by a caste of "benevolent specialists". History reveals that every separate administrative class uses their leverage to organize themselves as a privileged, exploiting elite. In modern conditions, this would mean a form of state capitalism. Without the masses being drawn into all aspects of economic and political administration, the transition to socialism cannot be sustained. "Workers' rule", i.e. the démocratic administration of society's affairs by the entire laboring population, is not the pursuit of democracy for its own sake, but to increase the productive forces, for progress. We need smarter people to wield ever more complex technology; and to systematically plan all spheres of production and distribution in the service of human needs. Without this we have continued capitalism, which means the further decay of society and the blocking of social advance.

In the period of transition to socialism, it is not yet possible to entirely eliminate the separation between administrative and directly productive personnel. But this separation is a constantly diminishing one. During this time, organizing mass supervision and control is an indispensable check on administrative and technical strata attempting to bend decision-making away from serving the mass interest. This workers' control movement is itself a subset of the overall struggle between differing class interests on all questions of policy

Marx, Engels and steam

Marx and Engels's observations about capitalism creating the material, economic conditions necessary for abolishing class divisions was based on the introduction of steam powered machinery. Since the "steam" revolution, there

have been many further revolutions in the technique of production, transportation and communications. A brief list to provide a sketchy overview:

Commercial electrical generation and transmission: lights, motors, telegraph and telephone.

The internal combustion engine (gas, diesel, jet turbine), both for electrical generation and for transportation (cars, trucks, trains, ships, planes).

Electronics (tube, transistor): radio, TV, radar.

Chemical industry: agricultural chemicals, plastics, composites;

Electronics (integrated chip): computers; and the fiber optics communications revolution just beginning.

Medical, biological, all sciences.

And a vast array of combinations of these technologies, that enable such things as communications satellites in earth orbit.

In short: tremendous technical possibilities exist for creating an abundance of products, and on this basis, creating the conditions for the all-round development of individuals, to be masters of their own fate and of society as a whole.

There is a tremendously riper basis for socialism than when Engels last wrote. If so, why has socialism not been achieved?

The conditions making socialism possible are not identical to the conditions that impel the masses toward the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Briefly put, socialism must not only be possible, but capitalism must become impossible.

This leads toward a discussion of capitalist economic crises; the political crises engendered in the bourgeoisie by economic collapse, wars and revolutionary opposition movements; the necessity for the conscious revolutionary forces to organize the masses and prepare for years and even decades in advance of such developments, and so on. And to discuss all of this takes us well beyond the scope of this talk.

One final remark on this subject. No one can predict

The technical and cultural basis for workers' socialism in the modern world

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whether or not we are nearing such a period of revolutionary crisis. But whatever the case may be, our current struggle needs to be illumined by a clear socialist perspective, included in which is this analysis about the existence today of the material basis for socialism; for the abolition of class distinctions.

But wasn't there a socialist revolution in Russia?

The material conditions for socialism proper certainly did not exist in Russia of 1917, or 1913 (pre-war). There certainly wasn't abundance, nor the prospect of it soon. The country was not very industrialized, especially the vast countryside. There was some steam-powered machinery and transport, but not much. There were virtually no cars, telephones, electricity, etc. In a society of 90% peasantry, ignorance and backwardness were pronounced. There was a lack of white collar skills and the preponderance of blue collar laborers (or perhaps "no collar/no shirt" of the dirt-poor peasantry).

What are the prospects for transition to socialism in these conditions? They are very difficult, since one has to create the material basis for socialism first, then embark on transition from this to socialism itself. Their tasks were something in the nature of "transition to transition to socialism".

For example, Russian society had not attained a level of development that facilitated drawing the working masses into administration; into all spheres of intellectual life: culture, science and especially government. The Russian party made efforts to do so, but weren't able to get very far in this. After awhile the Bolshevik leaders said "to hell with it" and came to rely on their newly-formed, loyal, ex-worker-peasant intelligentsia as a new ruling class. (To discuss this takes us afield, and we will elaborate on the historical ins/outs later when more research has been digested.)

Lacking the domestic economic prerequisites for socialism does not mean their efforts for transition were inherently doomed. In this situation, for social progress and the stability of the new, revolutionary order, there is a greater need for favorable external international factors, and for strong internal political positions.

Such international factors include: have socialist revolutions occurred in richer societies that could provide at least some industrial help and a lot of hope for the future? Is there a fierce capitalist encirclement and military intervention facing you? The situation was not good for the Russian workers here.

Such strong internal political factors include: has revolutionary ferment and the activation of the masses been kept alive? Is this activation motivated by strong socialist impulses of the most class conscious workers? Is there a clear workers' party able to avoid leading things into a blind alley? Are there appropriate democratic state structures, down to factory and neighborhood levels, to draw people into resolution of all problems? And we know that

there were problems on all these fronts with the Russian revolution. These are big subjects in themselves, which are not on our agenda for tonight.

The point is this: given this situation of a very poor economic basis for socialism (or transition thereto), the law of division of labor exerts itself. Society is going to need a class of administrators, etc. freed from the drudgery characteristic of that stage of productive labor, to organize the most basic industrial activity. And this class will be needed for a long period of time, because the conditions requiring it could not be changed quickly. On top of this, due to the masses' low educational and political level, the workers' control movement was bound to be ineffective. But this was dearly needed, in that the revolution inherited an income gap of something like 10 to 1 between engineers and factory workers, which is one indication of the wide gap in class conditions and interests that existed. (Not to mention the gap between each of these sectors and the peasantry.) In sum, very favorable soil existed for a new class to emerge, consolidate and organize society in its narrow interests. When you add to this the lousy international environment, and the internal political problems, history happened the way it did. State capitalism was erected.

I don't wish to discuss the question of "was this inevitable?" In hindsight, all history is inevitable. Theoretically it seems that the issue is: in the future, in countries that experience a revolution that has socialist aims but lack good economic conditions for transition to socialism, a better grasp of the problems will result in policies that deal with these sorts of problems better.

Is the USA ripe for workers' socialism?

Does the required economic basis for the transition to the abolition of classes exist in the USA today? Is there a basis in society for the workers to be able to exercise conscious control over a stratum of temporary administrative specialists; or, do conditions exist that can create the capacity to do so relatively quickly?

It seems to be the case, for the following reasons:

There is an incomparably greater standard of living than existed in 1917 Russia, and also than what Marx and Engels observed in Western Europe over 100 years ago.

There is a highly-educated blue collar workforce. In fact, labor that is really "unskilled" is becoming somewhat rare in society. These workers are not far away from having the skills necessary to actively participate in economic and political administration. On the downside, there also exists a large "aristocracy of labor", many of whom will take an actively anti-socialist attitude in an attempt to hold onto their privileged economic positions.

There are vast armies of white collar strata (engineers, accountants, technicians) who are nearer to blue collar workers in economic and social level. Of course, others of them who are now highly paid may not like the new society and would be expected to cause problems.

There is no peasantry, nor even much of a small

independent farmer strata left. This is a huge advantage. But on the downside, there is a large urban petty bourgeoisie, many of whom can be expected to throw prolonged temper tantrums at the new society, which will not regard them as superiors to lowly productive labor.

The conditions to eliminate much drudgery exist: whether in housework, seasonal agricultural work or other spheres. The productivity of labor is high enough to imagine the shortening of the working day, once things settle down and get organized.

There are vast educational resources, and in addition, communications technology that could be harnessed for this. For example, such mass media as the daily press and TV could be transformed from instruments designed to brainwash and confuse, to tools of enlightenment.

The resources certainly exist to vastly accelerate job training and in its wake, job rotation. This would be a big blow to boredom and for people receiving an all-round education in productive and scientific life. And the same technical advances that assist the planning of the economy, the advances in computerization and communications, would greatly facilitate workers' control and supervision of government, on the road to workers' self-administration itself.

Another downside to the present situation is that capitalism in decay has given rise to what some call the "underclass", those who have been driven into permanent unemployment and poverty. Functional illiteracy is widespread here, and by many accounts, is growing.

This is a problem. There is a glaring lack of labor discipline found here, and general backwardness. But this may not turn out to be a horrendous obstacle to socialism. Among other reasons, one of the experiences of recent social revolutions is that mass literacy campaigns have been very successful. For example in China, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Today, introducing individuals of the "underclass" into the workforce may resemble pulling teeth. But if the new society can provide, not only jobs for them, but jobs that carry some dignity, the situation is changed. This factor, in combination with various forms of coercion (discussed later), may enable the "underclass" to acquire working class qualities without too much disruption.

Possibilities opened up by a successful revolution

Beyond the question of the economic and technological possibilities for socialism evident now, there are the favorable factors that will emerge after a revolution in a modern capitalist society such as ours. Two such factors are:

- (1) A revolutionary society will take steps to rapidly eliminate the waste of labor power that was built into the capitalist organization of the economy.
- (2) Such a society will unleash new productive powers that are built into the new socialist mode of production. Two of these new powers are: (a) vastly expanded labor

initiative; and (b) the fruits of rational planning.

I. Wastage of labor power

Much labor-power is wasted today, either through enforced idleness or through being squandered in socially unproductive activity. It can be readily employed in socially useful work. Today's society does not lack articles of consumption (food, clothing, other necessities) with which to pay people. It does not lack means of production for their labor to set in operation. But only the new society in transition to socialism will be able to start putting this wealth to really productive use.

A. The unemployed. In the U.S. the number really out of work is huge. It is not 5 or 6%, as the Bureau of Labor Statistics states. Those who want jobs are probably closer to 15-20% or more. Those too discouraged to look don't count in the official statistics. Teenagers who have never been employed don't count. Many women aren't counted.

Once employed, the conditions of the individual person improve. But as well, instead of being a drain on resources, because today they are fed and clothed by one means or another, they would contribute to the increased wealth of society.

In addition, today many women are confined to stultifying household drudgery. But under changed social conditions, including childcare availability, and the existence of institutions for socialized housework, many would be eager to participate in social production, i.e. society. As well, there are large numbers of older people that want contact with productive activity for a portion of the day but are not wanted by the present-day economic organization.

B. Those employed in useless work today. For example:

I'd guess that about three-fourths of all lawyers are occupied litigating or consulting on corporate property disputes. One would think that this will simply be wiped out. This is a huge number of educated people. Lawyer jokes aside, there are many useful things that could be found for them to do. Other legal practices, for example representing individuals versus others and versus the new government, will of course not disappear for some time.

Most jobs in advertising would be unnecessary in the new society. We don't need tens of thousands of people wasting their lives trying to cajole people to spend their money on this product, not that; in this store, not that. The systematic organization of information on available products will require much fewer people to do a much better job than that done by contemporary advertising, which is mostly lies and distortions anyway.

By making medical care free on demand, the labor of hundreds of thousands being squandered by today's medical insurance bureaucracies could be employed in really useful work.

These are just a few examples.

C. Those employed in duplicate work today. A couple of examples:

There is an absurd level of duplication of competing

products. Whether cars, stereos, appliances and so on. This is a big wastage of engineering labor. It is also a hindrance to the automation of large scale production, by unnecessarily dividing production into smaller enterprises, not to mention absurd changes in design for purposes of deceiving the buyer that something is 'new and improved' when it is not.

There is an absurd level of wastage of computer programmers' labor, both in regard to unnecessary levels of competition, but also due to copyright and patent laws. As well, there is the secrecy inherent in the cutthroat capitalist nature of competition, which makes it imperative to deprive others of your knowledge, and to make technical people "reinvent the wheel" repeatedly.

D. Those employed in inefficient work with low productivity of labor. For example:

Many in retail trade fit this category, particularly in small shops. A somewhat different example is many sweatshop factories, where the issue is to apply more machinery, but this is often blocked today due to it being more profitable to employ cheap immigrant labor rather than make investments in fixed capital. The same thing applies to much agricultural labor, where immigrants are frequently employed.

E. Wastage of labor-power in the bloated government apparatus:

Now this is a really big subject. Socialism means cheap government. It means the administration of public affairs by workers' representatives, at workers' wages. It means an end to a fat caste of arrogant politicians and bureaucrats pigging out at the public trough. Beyond this generality, there are tremendous savings to be had through socialism.

1. The military-industrial complex and the armed forces: It is elementary for a socialist to know that modern wars result from capitalist antagonisms. The tremendous waste of the military-industrial complex will be ended along with capitalism itself. How fast this can be accomplished depends on the speed of the international workers' revolution. Some defensive outlays may be necessary for awhile. But it is hard to imagine these outlays being even a quarter of what is now spent to enforce U.S. imperialist bullying around the world. It is perhaps plausible that, in the conditions in which a revolution could take place in the U.S., capitalism would be falling like dominoes everywhere else. In that case, "turning swords into ploughshares" could really pick up a head of steam.

There is of course a gigantic wastage of scientific and engineering personnel and of production workers in the defense industry. This also includes the waste of labor-power and natural resources of industries that supply the arms contractors: aluminum, steel and so on.

In addition, something like 2 million people are removed from productive labor while in the armed services. And not the least of this is the destruction of war itself: of the people and property, and of the earth's ecology.

2. The domestic repressive apparatus.

Police, courts and prisons: A vast wastage occurs in the

huge domestic "military" apparatus.

In so far as this is used against workers' struggles, or to enforce a reign of terror against black and immigrant communities, clearly there can be an immediate 100% reduction of social outlays here.

It will be possible to eventually make some big savings similarly in the outlays now spent to deal with social crime. It should be possible to rapidly reduce the soil for it: the lack of job opportunities, the glorification of crime and violence in movies and TV, the humiliation of wage slavery.

Welfare: this point is related to that of the unemployed and the oppression of women mentioned previously. The resources, in the main, already exist to employ these people. There are no lack of things that need to be done. What is mainly lacking is job training, a comprehensive net of good childcare, and the transformation of the bulk of household labor from private economy to social economy: neighborhood laundries and cafeterias. And these are urgent priorities for a society on the road to socialism.

Massive bureaucracies: Many other aspects of present-day government administration are mired in huge and inefficient (if not harmful) bureaucracy. Today, some of this bureaucracy is needed to regulate businesses against their own narrow interests, for the interests of the capitalists as a whole, or to ameliorate some of the worst outrages of capitalism. For example, issues concerning pollution, workplace health and safety, consumer protection, and on and on.

There is a constant war in society between antagonistic interests: capitalist vs. capitalist; all of them vs. workers. With the ending of the government's role to protect capitalist interests, these sorts of issues can be sorted out in something approaching a harmonious way in all spheres of society separately: e.g. workplace safety; pollution control, etc. There will be no need for a huge bureaucracy to pretend to be doing something about these problems, in an ever-losing "confrontation" (or more likely, collusion) with capitalist interests. Bureaucracy can only partially regulate these irreconcilable contradictions, not eliminate them. The issue is to eliminate the basis for these problems, and in so doing, eliminate the huge do-nothing parasitic bureaucracies themselves.

F. Wastage of labor power to supply the useless luxury of the super-rich, which should require no elaboration. One irresistible point: expropriation of mansions, estates, yachts, etc. would quickly expand the facilities for workers' and children's vacations.

G. Wastage due to capitalist economic crises; due to irrational trade; and many more examples could be given.

* * *

Quite obviously, there is massive wastage of labor power that can be ended and turned into really productive, useful activity.

Of course, it is hard to imagine a revolution as sweeping as the overthrow of capitalism that would not be accompanied by massive dislocations, confusion, chaos, disruption and fierce resistance from those who want to defend the old

world. This complicates things immensely. Enormous resources will be spent dealing with such problems. And this does not even touch on the enormous environmental catastrophes that are brewing today and could cause big difficulties for socialist construction. Bringing an end to the waste of labor-power will not be easy just because what exists today is supremely irrational. It requires a continuing, hard revolutionary struggle to overcome the class that has an interest in this irrationality. But by the same token, just because it won't be easy, doesn't mean it can't be done.

More significant than utilizing the labor power that is now wasted:

II. The greater productive powers of the new social organization

All of this talk about science and technology runs the danger of conjuring up images of machinery. But the most powerful productive force in society, the most revolutionary part of technology, is working people. From them can flow: unfettered technological advance; rational usage of resources; and efficient management in general. Today we have the opposite on every point.

In talking about marshaling the productive powers of society, a key issue is the ability to unleash the conscious enthusiasm and initiative of all working people.

Initiative:

Bourgeois opinion is that socialism will never work, because it is against human nature to work for the general interest. They use the Soviet Union as an example: that attempting to follow socialist principles leads to stagnation of production, lack of inventiveness and a lack of effort. They say that only under "free enterprise" is there the incentive to exert oneself.

But what is this celebrated initiative under capitalism? It boils down to a couple of major things. For the capitalists (or more frequently, their hired managers), there is the incentive to get richer (or more precisely: to constantly expand capital or perish), and to figure out how to squeeze more profits from a workforce that has little reason to exert themselves beyond a minimum. The main incentive for workers is the hard reality of the fear of being fired. It is the initiative of unwilling wage slaves.

The irony is that individual initiative under socialism will be 10 or 100 or 1000 times more powerful than this.

The experience of the Soviet Union does not prove diddly-squat. Initiative in an all-encompassing state capitalist set-up has been something like the following: there is a chance for a tiny few to get rich, to receive prestige and awards. But this feature, which is taken for granted here, is limited there by the peculiar nature of their state property system and its (former) prohibition of competition to weed out the weak, and entrepreneurship to promote the inventive. The discipline of the capitalist market is replaced by the slothfulness of the bureaucracy.

For the masses, initiative is stymied by the ultra-conservative, self-satisfied bureaucracy; and even if a good idea were to make it through this labyrinth, the fruits of any technical advance, any increase in productivity, are seized by the well-off bureaucrats anyway. So why bother? As well, apparently the necessity of the "socialist" bureaucrats to maintain their pretensions resulted in a less harsh factory discipline and less ability to threaten workers with being fired. Both inventiveness and exertion are less prevalent.

Even with this situation, Soviet ingenuity and labor were responsible for some remarkable advances. It was not the total washout that the William Randolph Hearst types suggest. For example, industrialization, and some sciences such as space, math, and medicine. But this was mainly decades ago, in a more youthful phase of state capitalism.

Today there is mammoth stagnation. To a certain extent this is because such a society is lacking in some levers for initiative that we see in the west. But the bottom line is that this is also an exploiting, class-divided society and lacking in any basis for the socialist initiative of the masses as well. It therefore cannot disprove socialist initiative one iota.

The basic socialist ethic is: "to work hard and competently because this benefits oneself and one's dependents while also benefiting all humankind." Or more simply: "work to serve the general good". Is this pie in the sky? It might seem so to us living in capitalist society. Under capitalism the surplus labor not returned to the worker in his/her pay is taken by the capitalists and used for their interest: luxury consumption and expansion of capital for its own sake. As well, it is taken through taxes to fund the bloated military establishment, and to make interest payments to the banks on the national debt. And so on.

In addition, off-work charity is problematic. Workers are downtrodden from exploitation and have little time; charity serves to barely ameliorate, not solve, the crying abuses of capitalism; charitable organizations often are exploited by fat bureaucrats and/or con artists. So there is much cynicism against a socialist work ethic ever being possible. But under changed, socialist economic conditions, the surplus labor not returned to the worker directly, is instead in fact used for "the general good": e.g. expanding production that is geared to serving the masses' needs; social services for all: education, medical care, for handicapped and disabled, the aged, etc.; and for minimalized governmental/administrative costs.

Some factors that will contribute to socialist initiative and enthusiasm are: the realization of freedom from burdensome oppression of the old society; the all-round development of the individual becomes possible through education/training/job rotation. In short, a varied, exciting life of spurring rapid, visible progress on a world scale unfolds.

In this situation, the "ethic" of "work for the general good because this is in the best interests of the individual" acquires the force of truth. The happiness of the individual

is indeed contingent upon the happiness of all. Under capitalism, there is very little possibility to "work to serve the general good". There may be a sucker born every minute, but few are this naive, when the whole society is organized for the "happiness" of a minority versus the interests of the majority. So it becomes an ethic, a moral rule, that is in contradiction with the real world. It is pie in the sky.

It requires some theoretical imagination to see where under changed conditions the socialist motivation for work would become the opposite of a pipe dream, but rather, an obvious necessity, that after a number of years of the society acclimating to the new conditions, becomes a commonplace assumption. In addition, it requires a certain theoretical ability to see that these changed conditions (socialist planned economy) are also a necessity.

Transitional Incentives:

So what is the motivation to work effectively in a society on the road to socialism, where socialist ethics are not firmly rooted?

Material incentives are one thing needed until ideology catches up and conforms to the new reality, the new necessity.

Such material incentives include:

a) the general idea of "if you don't work, then you don't eat";

b) types of piecework, but it would seem, only for the most reluctant, backward types who haven't been previously trained in the elementary work discipline and cooperative labor of any industrialized society; and

c) varied methods to equalize the amount of pay with the actual amount of work performed in a given time (intensity) and in proportion to how distasteful the work might be (more pay for what still remains as necessarily arduous labor).

Social incentives are another side to the issue:

a) Socialist competition could be a check against inefficient enterprises, stagnation and self-satisfied inertia that flow from monopoly enterprises in a society still imbued with capitalist, me-first ethics. But this also would be used as a positive spur to inventiveness, debate, etc.;

b) peer group discipline and rules at the workplace; and

c) socialist inspiration: the enthusiasm that will be generated by the rapid advances on every front of human endeavor that the new society makes possible. For example solving the homeless problem. This provides moral authority for the new society and the incentive to exert oneself to solve stickier issues.

Let's sketch a hypothetical example. Let's take a team of software developers in today's defense industry, who might be working on something like cruise missile guidance programs. There is a notoriously slothful attitude. Just toll the bell, and punch the clock. Hide your progress to allow time to goof off. Now take a similar team and say:

"The worker's representatives in the National Assembly have decided on the following policy for the

transformation of medical care:

"We are eliminating billing for medical care. All are insured. Medical care will be basically free for everyone. This will end a scandal and outrage, but will also eliminate hundreds of thousands of now useless jobs in billing and administration and allow these people to be trained and employed in something more socially useful. No one is going to get filthy rich by making a private monopoly out of providing medical products and services. Big clinics will be set up in all inner cities neighborhoods. We aim to quickly eliminate xx% of infant mortality and birth defects through prenatal care. It will soon be possible to eradicate many preventable occupational diseases such as black lung and brown lung. We hope to train x thousand doctors from the ranks of the RNs (registered nurses) to be able to quickly provide primary care to all.

"And, we are going to provide immediate massive assistance to underdeveloped countries, as elementary justice and responsibility, but also as a tremendous spur to their economies and social advance.

"We need to get a handle on all immediately available medical resources, and the possibilities for efficiently utilizing them and for a rapid expansion of capacity, beginning with medical schools, to medical supply companies, through hospitals and clinics and pharmacies. And so on. We need to configure the software system so as to make the data available for the next step of devising a realistic plan of how to carry this out."

"You will be paid your accustomed rate, by the hour. And by the way: Another team is compiling all the software code ever written onto 500 compact disks in the source languages. There are no more copyrights, patents, nor company secrets. All the previous energies of software programmers will be available to you so you don't have to reinvent the wheel to do anything. As well, no one is going to get rich by spinning off some start-up company. Your motivation is a) get paid, and b) make a contribution to a giant first step toward solving world health problems. Another team will be pursuing the problem, to encourage different and varied approaches, etc. You can share advances, argue over perspectives, and so forth. There should be no winners and losers as a result."

Of course, this is an extremely rough sketch, incredibly simplistic, but I think it suffices for the point I am trying to make.

Will these programmers display tremendous enthusiasm? You'd have to think so.

Why talk about software programmers, a type of white collar work? I chose this example simply because of a recent discussion along these lines. But similar principles are involved regarding any type of productive labor and regarding any field of work: housing, transportation, childcare systems, and so forth.

Now, clearly for a large number of workers, the situation will be a lot more muddled. Perhaps due to the revolution they lost a previously cushy job, or were unemployed for an extended period, or experienced a major reduction in pay. You'd have to expect some people to be upset and even embittered. But it's reasonable to think that these sections of the workforce would be eventually swamped by the socialist advance going on.

For blue collar employees, one incentive that would eventually open up under socialism is the opportunity to acquire more technical, scientific knowledge, so that, for example, a machinist may acquire engineering skills. But the obverse is true for the engineer, who can learn something about machinist skills and overcome the limitations of practical ignorance.

Only with the merger of mental and manual (theoretical and practical might be better terms, as in the above example, a machinist certainly is also a mental worker) can cooperative work practices really develop. Today, theoretical and practical workers are treated as something akin to oil and water, and real cooperation is obstructed.

Socialism will be a society literally brimming with initiative, incentive, motivation, way beyond what these quickly sketched out concepts can convey.

Planning

According to bourgeois opinion: "It's impossible to plan an entire economy efficiently. It is too complex. A market is needed to determine what to invest, how much to produce, what properties a product should have, etc. This is proven by the Soviet Union, where a planned economy results in bottlenecks, shortages, and shoddy goods."

But in the Soviet Union, selfish bureaucratic departments (and the very existence of bureaucracy is a manifestation of class division) war with each other over resources. This paralyzes everything. (See the Pentagon or Boeing for a familiar example of the same thing on a lesser scale.)

Under state capitalism, the masses do not see their interests in "the plan." Where classes are in hostile opposition, there can be no harmonious plan, nor any marshaling of the labor enthusiasm and ingenuity of the masses. And under these conditions, it is a wonder that the Soviet Union worked as well as it did.

The Soviet Union did experience rapid growth in the 30s, and again for several decades after World War II. But this was not the fruit of "socialist planning." It was a capitalist expansion, that, just as in the western countries, created great disproportions in the economy. Imbalance was intensified by gargantuan military spending. New industrial technology and productivity stagnated. And today, a profound economic crisis is going from bad to utterly bad. (Of course, it will require much work to flesh out the details of this process.)

In the heady days of the Reaganite expansion, the glories of the market were sung by every bourgeois. But the ever-worsening cycle of economic crises reveals that market-based capi-

talism also results in extreme disproportions, disequilibrium, and all-around breakdown. It leads to the situation where socialist planning is the only way out. Engels, in his *Speeches at Elberfeld*, 1845, said "planning would be easy". Engels may have been a bit too exuberant here. I doubt it would have been all that easy then. But today, from the technical angle, despite the complexity of modern production, it may actually be regarded as "easy". But aside from this technical side, the more important and tricky side to the issue is the factor of the mass level of political and organizational skills in society and the ability to devise plan(s) that the masses have a role in devising, see as their own, and with which they have vital interests in seeing accomplished. And this in turn would imply a vast struggle, in every cell of society, where different ideas and interests conflict and resolve themselves. And it would seem inaccurate to describe such a process as "easy".

Since Engels' time, there has been a massive concentration of enterprises into gigantic corporations. And they plan everything that goes on within their sphere. Some produce more than entire countries (e.g. GM and Boeing). This is a favorable factor for transition to a planned economy.

As well, there are the cultural factors in existence in the U.S. mentioned earlier.

First, from the technical angle.

We are now experiencing a profound revolution in technology: the application of computers to virtually every aspect of life. Computer chips are going into everything these days. It's not a stretch of the imagination to see machines keeping track of everything produced as it is being produced. And of course, with bar codes and readers, and OCR's (optical character readers), one can keep track of all commerce, of all distribution, sales, and inventory. As well, plastic (i.e. electronic) money and electronic transfers (in the transitional period when commodity production and money still exist) and later: plastic ledgers, keeping track of earned work credits and expenditures of them, will simplify personal banking and other forms of accounting.

Technically, planning the economy appears almost easy. In content: deciding what resources to allocate ("invest") and what to produce, and the mobilization and participation of the masses in the process, in a democratic way, seems more problematic.

But the advances in the technique of communications have a definite positive impact on the political/organizational side of the problem. They enable decision-making by democratic bodies to be much more informed, and delegated management functions to be more understandable, through the ability to provide lots of information to all the concerned people regarding the decisions that need to be taken; and conversely, to receive feedback.

And this problem of the planning process may not turn out to be as sticky as might be imagined, once the issues are investigated further.

For the success of socialist planning the plan must roughly serve the best interests of masses of working

people. To ensure this, the struggle to prevent a stratum of administrative and managerial specialists from becoming a separate class for-itself; the struggle toward the elimination of, not just antagonistic classes, but all class distinctions, seems decisive.

Hence: building on modern industrial, technological, scientific (and hence, cultural/educational) advances, under the transition to socialism, by eliminating waste and achieving a higher level of productivity, it is possible to rapidly attack the basis of class division: the monopoly of scientific, administrative knowledge. And this socialist re-organization is not simply a "nice idea" but it is a crying necessity. It is the only way to eliminate the crying ills of this society: including hunger, homelessness, overwork and drudgery, slums, the absurd medical system, the soil for social crime, ecological destruction, racial discrimination, women's oppression, the decayed character of schools, the scandalous care of aged, and so on.

One key aspect of the new society is that it must immediately start providing assistance for underdeveloped societies to rapidly march down the road of this type of industrialization, socialist industrialization in service of human needs. It is urgent to raise these societies' level rapidly to the point where their own productive forces are powerful enough to generate large amounts of "surplus product" to finance further progress from their own efforts. They have to "get over the hump" on this, to solve the problem all underdeveloped societies have had: robbed, slow industrialization if any, low productivity with little surplus left over for the expansion of production and for social progress.

The backward countries must be assisted rapidly. This is elementary justice and a crucial aspect of the program for imperialist countries that have dealt out so much suffering in recent centuries. And without this, the tide of misery demoralizes all attempts at socialism everywhere. And in addition there is the heavy pressure on the earth's resources and ecology from the existence of backward productive forces. For example, there is the problem of the rainforests and of soil erosion, etc. that threaten life on earth. (Without rainforests and wetlands, there are no birds. Without birds, there is no agriculture. And so forth.) But the most fundamental thing is: today the world economy is deeply interrelated. This can be seen in the immense net of world trade. The consolidation of socialism anywhere is sped up by the spread of socialism everywhere. And if massive assistance to dependent countries could be regarded as a short-term drag on things in a more industrially advanced country, it will certainly be an indispensable, immense stimulus to economic and social development on a longer-range basis. And it will put an end to the imperialist crime of enforcing economic stagnation on vast territories of the globe.

In closing, leaving aside the issue of the conditions for a revolution itself, the technological and cultural bases for transition towards socialism clearly exist. On this May Day, we ask that all who agree with this perspective lend a hand at building our revolutionary party. Our aim is the economic liberation of working people, the abolition of class distinctions; our aim is workers' socialism. □