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## WORLD REVOLUTION OF THE PROLETARIAT

Marx analyzed the inner contradictions of capitalism and how they affected the masses of humanity. This was a major intellectual achievement, comparable to the achievements of Darwin, Newton, and Copernicus. But Marx did not show humanity the causes of its suffering simply so that we would know why we suffer. He examined the cause in order to show the way to a cure. The supreme achievement and greatest appeal of Marxism is its demonstration of how the capitalist system contains the seeds of its own destruction, seeds which will mature and blossom into a more humane social order, socialism.

Marx never said this would happen overnight, nor that the transition from capitalism to socialism would be painless. The transition from feudalism to capitalism involved centuries of class struggle, revolutions, wars, and civil wars. This was necessary for the bourgeoisie to gain the political maturity to rule as a class.

Similarly, the transition from capitalism to socialism is bound to be a protracted period of intense and bitter struggle between those who want to hold onto the old system of capitalism, whatever the costs, and those who want and need socialism.

During this period of bitter struggle and suffering, it is easy to lose our sense of direction and our will. The struggle for socialism is not just an external struggle to change prevailing conditions; it is also an internal struggle, a struggle to change ourselves and qualify to rule as a class. The struggle for socialism necessarily involves a struggle for our minds and our hearts.

This struggle has always been difficult. The opponents of socialism have always said that socialism is impossible, even before the Soviet revolution. The opponents of socialism have always pointed to every problem faced by the Soviet, Chinese, Cuban, and other socialist societies as proof that socialism could not work. We have always had to struggle against the distortions and falsifications of our enemies in our attempt to understand the realities of class struggle in the contemporary world.

The year 1989 intensified this struggle. As we watched millions of East Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, and Romanians demonstrate and overthrow their Communist governments, it seemed as though our worst nightmares were coming true: socialism would not work; those who had lived in socialism were rejecting it; capitalism was the preferred system for humanity; we were proven by history to be idealistic dreamers.

It is still too early to understand the full significance of 1989, but it is important to 1989 in perspective. A few observations are in order.

First of all, imperialism has not changed. While the so-called Soviet "empire" in Eastern Europe was being dismantled, the real imperial power, the United States, was sending warplanes to the Philippines to support the Aquino government, and preparing its invasion of Panama. The massive deployment of U.S. troops to the Middle East leaves little doubt as to who the real imperialists are. Within the imperialist system headed by the United States, there are still tens of millions of children dying of starvation every year and hundreds of millions of people living at the threshold of subsistence.

Secondly, it is by no means clear that the results of the transformations in Eastern Europe will be beneficial to the peoples of these nations. The general expectation was

that these nations would move in the direction of the industrial nations of Western Europe and North America. But, as some leftists pointed out at the time, to the extent that capitalism is introduced in Eastern Europe, the result is likely to be the form of capitalism that we see in Mexico or Turkey, not the United States or France. We are already seeing growing unemployment, rising prices, and the enrichment of a relatively small group of entrepreneurs. In short, although the peoples of Eastern Europe appear to be rejecting Marxism, the Marxian analysis of capitalism is still relevant for understanding social change in these nations.

Third, the achievements of the historic socialist revolutions of the twentieth century cannot be denied (although they are frequently ignored). Whatever their problems, the Soviet and Chinese governments have transformed their societies. There is simply no comparison between the Soviet Union and Tsarist Russia, or between the Peoples Republic of China and China under the warlords. An analogy might be useful. Our own Civil War, in freeing the slaves, constituted a progressive step forward. Even though it did not solve the problems of racism in the U.S., no one would suggest returning the antebellum South. Similarly, few would suggest that the Soviet Union, China, or Cuba return to their pre-revolutionary societies.

Finally, socialism has not disappeared. There have been dramatic changes in the socialist world, but none of the countries that had indigenous, home grown socialist revolutions have rejected socialism. Neither the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, or Vietnam have abandoned socialism, although all are seeking new ways of applying socialism to the particular conditions of their societies. As Gorbachev observed:

In spite of all deformations, all losses and the seriousness of everything our people have endured, the socialist idea is alive and deeply-rooted in their souls.... People value the socialist ideal not because socialism is merely a high-sounding word. It reflects concepts of a society of justice, equality, freedom and democracy. (as quoted in Boice 1990:7)

In those Eastern European nations where socialism came with the Soviet army in the aftermath of WWII, what is being rejected is not socialism but a particular form of socialism. As Gorbachev put it,

When somebody says this is the collapse of socialism, we counter it with the question, "What socialism?" That which has been, in point of fact, a variation of Stalin's authoritarian bureaucratic system that we have ourselves discarded? (as quoted in Silber 1990a:13)

In Nicaragua, the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas is of course disheartening, but it does not erase the historic achievement of the Sandinista revolution. The mere fact that state power has been transferred from one party to another through electoral means is tribute to that revolution. Clearly, this was impossible under the U.S.-backed Somoza regime.

In each of these cases, neither socialism nor the ideals which socialists have fought for have been defeated. The struggle is not over, it is merely entering a new phase. As we enter this new phase of struggle, it is essential that Marxists understand both their achievements and their failures.

The Soviet Union occupies a central position in this new phase of struggle. In order to understand the current crisis of socialism, therefore, it is necessary to review the course of the Soviet revolution. This review must be conducted in terms of historical materialism and the Marxist theory of proletarian revolution.

Before proceeding, it is important to understand the powerful forces operating against a scientific understanding of Soviet society. As Cohen has pointed out, the Western media has systematically distorted our view of the Soviet Union by highlighting the negative aspects of Soviet society and ignoring the positive features, by using value-laden terminology in describing Soviet society, and by creating the impression that the Soviet Union is guilty of all accusations against it (Cohen 1984). The resulting negative views of the Soviet Union are accepted by many tendencies on the left who make

criticism of the Soviet Union part of their political agenda. At the same time, many of those who have supported the Soviet Union have been reluctant to acknowledge the real defects that exist.

All of this means that it is extremely difficult to gather basic empirical data on the nature of Soviet society, much less analyze this data in a scientific manner. For example, Cockburn reports on a conversation with Lynn Turgeon, a retired economics professor who has regularly visited the Soviet Union since 1966:

"I think, contrary to all the dire reporting, that supplies—mainly food but also stuff in department stores—are better than they were four years ago," he told me. "I always collect farm market prices and have been doing so for a long time, and my hobby paid off this time. The increase in inflation is confined to Moscow and Leningrad, and outside those cities there was no increase in repressed inflation"

"What does this mean?"

"It means that the farmers' markets, the best measure we have for repressed inflation, do not show any heating up in the economy. Pork sells for five times as much in Moscow and Leningrad as it does in Voronezh, for example."

"And those stories of bread riots and scarcity?"

"I think they are largely manufactured, to drum up support for Shatalin's 500-day program to convert to a so-called market economy. There's a real symbiosis of interest between what I term the socialist bourgeoisie in Moscow and the Western reporters. The socialist bourgeoisie are hellbent on getting convertible rubles so they can pick up their VCRs and porno cassettes when they travel abroad. They are anxious for the yuppie life, and you can't have that without a convertible ruble. Most Russians don't travel and couldn't care less about convertibility. The Muscovite intelligentsia has a dreadful tendency to hysteria, leaping from one extreme to another. The Western journalists are eager to snap up anything negative about the Soviet economy, so then it becomes self-perpetuating. The Russian socialist bourgeoisie produce stories of disaster; the Western journalists enlarge their significance, and then the Russians quote these Western stories in their debates in Moscow as evidence of the need for crisis action."

"All the same, what about the bread riots?"

"First of all, the CNN report only said white bread was in short supply. Russians prefer dark bread as a rule. I was in Moscow just about the same time and the only thing in short supply was cigarettes. A lot of these shortages stem from speculative buying; you get rid of that by rationing."

"What about the inability to harvest the bumper crop?"

"That's chronic. It doesn't alter the fact that this is the biggest crop in Russian history and, even if the usual amount is wasted, they should have a good year. There's a high correlation between Soviet growth and good crops."

"In other words, the existing economic program is doing better than is generally recognized."

"Yes. The consumer goods output of the defense sector—in other words, their conversion program—increased by 22 percent in the first six months of this year." (Cockburn 1990:370)

In a similar vein, Sovietologist Jerry F. Hough recently observed:

Once again Americans are surprised and confused by events in the Soviet Union. Once again the question arises: How should we respond to the new conditions.

The crucial first step is for Americans to stop relying so heavily on the wishful thinking and anxiety of the Moscow radicals. We believed them when they said they were Mikhail Gorbachev's only supporters against the party apparatus, the bureaucrats and Yegor Ligachev. We believed them when they reversed themselves and said that Gorbachev was irrelevant, that Boris Yeltsin was defining the Soviet future and that the Soviet Union in 1990 would follow the 1989 path of Central Europe. We have a tendency to believe them again now that they are talking about the end of perestroika and reform.

This analysis has consistently been nonsense, and it is nonsense now. (Hough 1991:B7)

Clearly, not only are "the facts" subject to differing interpretations, but these facts themselves are in dispute. If we are to maintain any independence of thought on this issue, therefore, it is essential that we seek out the full range of views about the Soviet Union and evaluate them without prejudice. This is a difficult undertaking, and there is no reason to expect that our results will be universally acceptable.

## 8.I. VIEWS OF THE SOVIET UNION

The international bourgeoisie, of course, has understood the significance of the Bolshevik Revolution from the very beginning, and has treated the Soviet Union as Public Enemy Number One, and "Evil Empire" that threatens bourgeois society and the bourgeois way of life. This gut reaction of the bourgeoisie has found theoretical expression in such views as the notion of "totalitarianism."

The more class conscious members of the proletariat, by contrast, cannot but welcome the overthrow of capitalism wherever it occurs. Such workers may view the Soviet Union within the framework of Marxism:

That there are deficiencies in Soviet society is obvious. The most serious of these, including lags in labor productivity resulting from slackness and absenteeism, the Soviet authorities are trying to correct. And although there have been great cultural advances there should have been more. Soviet writers on historical and dialectical materialism, for instance, have developed a semi-dogmatic approach that virtually precludes advance in the realm of general theory. In considering such deficiencies, however, Marxists have to see them in Marxist terms. What Marx would have said of such deficiencies is clear from the *Gotha Program*. He would have regarded them in general as the inevitable consequences of a society but shortly emerged from capitalism (and feudalism)—and existing in a still predominantly capitalist world. He would have seen that whatever its faults, this society is on the whole the best that history can produce at present and that those who lamentingly parade Utopian blueprints are trying not to help but to hinder. He would have seen also that it is a vigorous and growing social organism, and that if we had a world of nations like the U.S.S.R., there would be neither war nor imperialism, neither exploitation nor mass oppression, and no threat of nuclear annihilation. (Cameron 1985:112)

Due, however, to the hegemony of bourgeois anti-Soviet propaganda and to contradictions within the working class movement itself, a variety of views on the nature of Soviet society have emerged within the workers' movement:

1. Social democratic parties associated with the Second International have consistently held "that the Bolshevik Revolution was little more than an armed adventurist coup" and the Soviet Union "was actually an embarrassment to genuine socialism" (Line of March 1982a:43). Social democratic views of the Soviet Union tend to be similar to those of bourgeois scholars. Such views are attractive to middle-class intellectuals who would like to do away with capitalism, provided this can be done painlessly and without loss of their own privileged position in society.

2. The international communist movement associated with the Third International has equally consistently defended the Bolshevik Revolution and held that, with the completion of the first Five Year Plan of 1934, the Soviet Union "had qualitatively transformed the previously prevailing property relations and had successfully established a new, socialist mode of production" (Line of March 1982a:43). Although there are problems with this view, it has been held by the most determined and class conscious members of the international working class, those willing to accept the responsibilities, as well as the vision, of socialism. Consequently, it deserves to be taken seriously.

It should be noted, further, that Soviet views of their own society have changed dramatically over the course of the Soviet revolution. Prior to the mid-twenties, it was generally accepted that socialism could not be built in the Soviet Union unless working class revolutions occurred in the more industrialized nations of Western Europe. After the triumph of Stalin's "socialism in one country" theory, it was generally accepted that

socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union by the mid-thirties. This view was officially stated in the 1936 constitution, and in all subsequent Soviet constitutions. Khrushchev denounced the "crimes of Stalinism" in his secret speech in 1956, but the view that the Soviet Union was socialist was not changed.

As a result of splits within the international communist movement, two additional views have developed.

3. Trotsky and the Fourth International have held that the Stalin, on behalf of a rising bureaucratic caste, betrayed the Bolshevik Revolution and created a "degenerated workers' state."

4. Following the split in the international communist movement, the communist parties of China and Albania advanced the thesis that, although Stalin had established socialism in the Soviet Union, his successors had restored capitalism. This is the Maoist "restoration of capitalism" thesis (Nicolaus 1975).

5. Most recently, Paul Sweezy has developed the idea that the Soviet Union is a "post-revolutionary society," a new social order which is neither capitalist nor socialist. Post-revolutionary society represents an "important historic advance over capitalism" since it guarantees employment, education, health, and other social welfare benefits. But a new ruling class has established itself and rules through the state and Party bureaucracies. Consequently, post-revolutionary society has stagnated and shows "no more visible signs of a way out" than does capitalism (Sweezy 1980:151); for further discussion of the different views of Soviet society, see Bell 1958, Elliott 1984, Line of March 1982a, Socialist Labor Party 1978, Sweezy 1983).

The main lines of these divisions have not really changed all that much with the dramatic course of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union and the overthrow of ruling Communist Parties in Eastern Europe. According to social democracy, socialism has not failed because it has never been tried. Trotskyists and Maoists tend to see *perestroika* as part of a continuing attempt to restore capitalism by the Soviet elite, contrary to the interests of the Soviet working class. It appears that only those in the communist movement are engaged in fundamentally re-examining their previously held views. Some communists are rejecting Marxism-Leninism, others are holding onto earlier views without undue change.

Clearly, proponents of each of these views can marshal impressive arguments in their support. Equally clearly, none of these arguments have been sufficiently compelling to compel universal support, even among those who accept the basic tenets of Marxism. A fresh approach was needed, even before the events of 1989 forced a re-examination of all previous dogma.

A methodological note is in order. In Chapter Two I discussed Chamberlain's method of multiple working hypotheses and its importance in the analysis of social, economic, and political phenomena. This method must become part of the intellectual tool kit of scientific socialism. It is indispensable in dealing with the complex processes of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Rather than viewing these phenomena in terms of one "correct line" which is held to be "scientific" by this or that left group, the various interpretations of Soviet society by Leninists, Democratic Socialists, Trotskyists, Maoists, and bourgeois social scientists may be viewed as so many working hypotheses, each of which offers different insights which can contribute to our understanding.

Too frequently, the question of the nature of the Soviet Union and "existing socialism" (perhaps it should now be called "previously existing socialism") is approached in a mechanical and metaphysical manner: the Soviet Union either is socialist, or it is not; its bureaucracy either is a ruling class, or it is not. The antidote to such thinking, of course, is dialectics. The Soviet Union both is, and is not, socialist; its bureaucracy both is, and is not, a ruling class. "Existing socialism," in other words, must be viewed dialectically, not just in terms of what it is, but what it has been and what it is becoming, and in terms of its interconnections with the global sweep of modern social change.

I have suggested that the Soviet Union is best viewed as a Protosocialist Nation, a social taxon that includes China, Cuba, and other socialist bloc nations as well as the Soviet Union (Ruyle 1975, 1987, 1988b). The term has been chosen with care. "Proto-" is a Greek-derived prefix that means first, or earliest form of, and refers to the fact that these nations are early, rudimentary, and as yet incomplete forms of socialism which do not yet, and can not yet, manifest all the attributes of the socialism of the future. Protosocialist Nations are still state societies in which ruling elites have special instruments of violence and thought control at their disposal.

Protosocialist Nations emerge as underdeveloped portions of the world capitalist system break away and embark on autonomous paths of socioeconomic development. Although not socialist, they are on the road to socialism and are parts of the world transition to socialism. Protosocialist Nations, then, are historically limited social formations. They exhibit distinctive laws of motion which are not those of capitalism. Further (and this is a point of considerable political significance for those struggling for socialism in the imperialist nations) the laws of motion of protosocialism are not those that will characterize the socialist world of the future.

Finally, it is essential to understand that the protosocialist nations do not exist in isolation, but are rather dialectically interlinked with the imperialist system. It is impossible to understand Soviet history, for example, without taking into consideration the consistent threats to Soviet power from world imperialism in the intervention of the imperialist powers in the civil war, the threat of Nazi imperialism and the Nazi invasion, and the continuing threat of United States imperialism.

In developing this view, it is necessary to first examine the classic Marxian view of the communist future. We will then be in a better position to see how the Soviet Union both is, and is not, socialist.

## 8.II. MARX'S VIEW OF THE COMMUNIST FUTURE

Marx's critics (and, alas, even his supporters) frequently impute to him an idyllic myth of socialism: one day soon, the workers will go to the barricades and up the revolution. After that, all our problems will disappear, and we can "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner," just as we like. Marx, however, never held such a view, but instead criticized those who would "substitute the catchword of revolution for revolutionary development":

While we say to the workers: You have 15, 20 or 50 years of civil wars and international conflicts to go through, not just in order to change prevailing conditions but also to change yourselves and to qualify for political control, you say, on the contrary: 'We must immediately come to power, or we can go to sleep'. (Marx 1852c:105)

Marx and Engels further observed that

Communism is for us not a stable state which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. (Marx and Engels 1846:26)

It is important that we do not attempt to sanitize Marx. Marx was clearly a humanist with compassion for the sufferings of the poor and the oppressed. He was also a realist, and devoted his life to a scientific examination of the causes of human suffering in capitalism and to the cure, and the cure was not a gentle one.

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. (Marx and Engels 1848:62)

As to ourselves, in view of our whole past there is only one path open to us. For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history and

in particular the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat as the great level of the modern social revolution; it is, therefore, impossible for us to co-operate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle cry: The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. We cannot, therefore, co-operate with people who openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic big bourgeois and petty bourgeois. (Marx 1879:555)

Someday the worker must seize political power in order to build up the new organization of labor; he must overthrow the old politics which sustain the old institutions, if he is not to lose heaven on earth, like the old Christians who neglected and despised politics.

But we have not asserted that the ways to achieve that goal are everywhere the same.

You know that the institutions, mores, and traditions of various countries must be taken into consideration, and we do not deny that there are countries—such as America, England, and if I would more familiar with your institutions, I would perhaps also add Holland—where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means. This being the case, we must also recognize the fact that in most countries on the continent the lever of our revolution must be force; it is force to which we must someday appeal in order to erect the rule of labor. (Marx 1872:523)

As far as I am aware, Marx fairly consistently used the term communism rather than socialism to describe his own politics and his own vision of the future. Although Tucker states that "Marx and Engels tended to use these two words interchangeably" (1978:xx), I'm not sure this was the case. It was Engels that coined the term "scientific socialism" to describe his and Marx's views (without, it is true, any protest from Marx). After Marx's death, his lower phase of communism came to be called socialism, as Lenin observed:

in the first phase of Communist society (generally called Socialism) "bourgeois right" is *not* abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic transformation so far attained, *i.e.*, only in respect of the means of production. "Bourgeois right" recognizes them as the private property of separate individuals. Socialism converts them into common property. *To that extent*, and to that extent alone, does "bourgeois right" disappear....

This is a "defect," says Marx, but it is unavoidable during the first phase of Communism; for, if we are not to fall into Utopianism, we cannot imagine that, having overthrown capitalism, people will at once learn to work for society *without any standards of right*; indeed, the abolition of capitalism *does not immediately lay* the economic foundations for *such* a change....

But the state has not yet altogether withered away, since there still remains the protection of "bourgeois right" which sanctifies actual inequality. For the complete extinction of the state, complete Communism is necessary.

Marx continues:

In a higher phase of Communist society, when the enslaving subordination of individuals in the division of labor has disappeared, and with it also the antagonism between mental and physical labour; when labour has become not only a means of living, but itself the first necessity of life; when, along with the all-round development of individuals, the productive forces too have grown, and all the springs of social wealth are flowing more freely—it is only at that stage that it will be possible to pass completely beyond the narrow horizon of bourgeois rights, and for society to inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs! (Lenin 1917: 78-79)

Marx consciously avoided drawing blueprints for the communist future, we may develop a fairly clear notion of the essential elements of that future from his remarks (Sweezy 1983). The communist society of the future would be a classless, and hence stateless, society built by a dictatorship of the proletariat after the overthrow of capitalism. The working class would appropriate the highly developed productive plant built by the bourgeoisie and operate it according to social need, rather than private profit. The dictatorship of the proletariat would be characterized by complete democracy, with

free debate and democratic election of officials who would be paid no more than a worker's wage, as in the Paris Commune. When it was no longer needed, this dictatorship would wither away, to be replaced by a communist "administration of things" which would not only provide material abundance for all, but would also facilitate the free development of all members of the communist world.

It is also clear that Marx regarded the early phase of communism—or socialism—as a process rather than as an ideal—or "genuine"—condition which would be implemented immediately after the revolution. It is also clear that Marx was aware of the possibility that the revolution may break out in a "backward" nation. Thus, in the Manifesto, Marx and Engels note that:

The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilisation. (Marx and Engels 1848:61-62)

This passage has been noted by both Stalin (1924:18) and Huberman and Sweezy (1964:105), who point out that if "Russia" is substituted for "Germany" one has a presentiment of the actual course of revolution in the twentieth century.

In his later years, Marx himself became increasingly concerned about the potential for revolution in Russia, but he regarded the participation of the working classes of the most highly industrialized nations as crucial to this process. Thus, in the Preface to the Russian edition of The Communist Manifesto in 1882, Marx and Engels state:

And now Russia! During the Revolution of 1848-49, not only the European princes, but the European bourgeois as well, found their only salvation from the proletariat, just beginning to waken, in Russian intervention. The tsar was proclaimed the chief of European reaction. Today he is a prisoner of war of the revolution, in Gatchina, and Russia forms the vanguard of revolution action in Europe.

The Communist Manifesto had as its object the proclamation of the inevitably impending dissolution of modern bourgeois property. But in Russia we find, face to face with the rapidly developing capitalist swindle and bourgeois landed property, just beginning to develop, more than half the land owned in common by the peasants. Now the question is: Can the Russian obshchina, though greatly undermined, yet a form of the primeval common ownership of land, pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership? Or, on the contrary, must it first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West?

The only answer to that possible today is this: If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present common ownership of land may serve as the starting-point for a communist development. (Marx and Engels 1882:471-472 )

On the other hand, Marx was aware of the danger that a revolution, even in the industrialize nations, would be crushed by outside intervention.

The specific task of bourgeois society is the establishment of a world market, at least in outline, and of production based on this world market. As the world is round, this seems to have been completed by the colonisation of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan. The difficult question for us is: on the Continent the revolution is imminent and will immediately assume a socialist character. Is it not bound to be crushed in this little corner, considering that in a far greater territory the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant? (Marx 1858:676)

Thus, one does not find in the thought of Marx any rigid "prediction" that the revolution will occur first in the most "advanced" nations, nor any simplistic assumption that socialism will solve all of humanities problems. One finds, rather, an appreciation of the difficulties, complexities, and dangers of revolutionary development and an insistence that, in spite of all this, humanity must find its way through this process for there is no other hope for our survival or salvation.

The possibility that the revolution may break out first in a "backward" nation, specifically Russia, was seriously considered by Marx and Engels, and it was understood

that such a revolution could form the starting point for communist development if it were joined by a proletarian revolution in the West. The question of what would happen to a revolution limited to Russia is not addressed by Marx or Engels, however. It was Stalin who was forced to solve this practical problem.

### 8.III. PROTOSOCIALISM IN DIALECTICAL PERSPECTIVE

"The bourgeoisie," according to the *Communist Manifesto*, "has played a most revolutionary role in history" (Marx and Engels 1848:5). By overthrowing feudalism and incorporating the entire world in a single industrial system capable of providing abundance for all, the bourgeoisie has created the material conditions which alone can support socialism. By tearing the direct producers from the land and creating the modern proletariat, the bourgeoisie has created the force which alone can build socialism. The bourgeoisie, in short, creates the conditions which will lead to its own negation in a world socialist society.

It was reasonable enough to assume that those nations which led the world into the capitalist present would also lead the world into the socialist future. It would have been well had this been so. We can only imagine what our world would look like if the tremendous productive potential of Europe, North America, and Japan had been devoted to building a socialist world of peace and abundance, rather than being wasted in senseless wars of imperialist aggression and anti-communist harassment. As Huberman and Sweezy observe:

as Engels once remarked, "history is about the most cruel of all goddesses." She has decreed that the world transition to socialism, instead of being relatively quick and smooth, as it might have been if the most productive and civilized nations had led the way, is to be a long-drawn-out period of intense suffering and bitter conflict. (Huberman and Sweezy 1964:112)

During this period of "intense suffering and bitter conflict," it has been the formerly backward, semi-colonial nation, what Stalin called the "weakest links" in the world imperialist system, that have experienced the first socialist revolutions. It is these nations that are leading the world into the socialist future. This contradictory development has led to a contradictory social order, protosocialism.

The revolution of the working class is not an event but a process, a process, moreover, which is international in scope. This process develops unevenly, as Stalin explains in his discussion of the Leninist concept of a "world revolutionary movement:"

Formerly the proletarian revolution was regarded exclusively as the result of the internal development of a given country. Now, this point of view is no longer adequate. Now the proletarian revolution must be regarded primarily as the result of the development of the contradictions within the world system of imperialism, as the result of the snapping of the chain of the imperialist world front in one country or another.

Where will the revolution begin? Where, in what country, can the front of capital be pierced first?

Where industry is more developed, where the proletariat constitutes the majority, where there is more culture, where there is more democracy—that was the reply usually given formerly.

No, objects the Leninist theory of revolution; *not necessarily where industry is more developed*, and so forth. The front of capital will be pierced where the chain of imperialism is weakest, for the proletarian revolution is the result of the breaking of the chain of the world imperialist front at its weakest link; and it may turn out that the country which has started the revolution, which has made a breach in the front of capital, is less developed in a capitalist sense than other, more developed countries, which have, however, remained within the framework of capitalism.

In 1917 the chain of the imperialist world front proved to be weaker in Russia than in the other countries. It was there that the chain gave way and provided an outlet for the

proletarian revolution. Why? Because in Russia a great popular revolution was unfolding, and at its head marched the revolutionary proletariat, which had such an important ally as the vast mass of the peasantry who were oppressed and exploited by the landlords. Because the revolution there was opposed by such a hideous representative of imperialism as tsarism, which lacked all moral prestige and was deservedly hated by the whole population. The chain proved to be weaker in Russia, although that country was less developed in a capitalist sense than, say, France or Germany, England or America. . . .

That is why Lenin said that: "The West-European capitalist countries . . . are accomplishing their development towards Socialism . . . not by the even 'ripening' of Socialism, but by the exploitation of some countries by others, by the exploitation of the first of the countries to be vanquished in the imperialist war combined with the exploitation of the whole of the East. On the other hand, precisely as a result of the first imperialist war, the East has finally been drawn into the revolutionary movement, has been drawn into the common maelstrom of the world revolutionary movement." (Stalin 1924:35-37)

This process of world revolution is well underway. At the time the *Communist Manifesto* was written, the idea of socialism was confined to a few small sects in Western Europe. By the end of the nineteenth century, Engels could write that socialism "had developed into a powerful party before which the world of officialdom trembles" (as quoted by Huberman and Sweezy 1964:102). In 1917, the proletariat of the Soviet Union had taken power and began the process of building socialism. Immediately thereafter, socialism became a world-wide movement, as Communist Parties were formed throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and well as Europe and the United States. With the victories of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and the Vietnamese Revolution in 1975, fully one third of our species became consciously involved in the task of building socialism. Further, Marxian socialism became the dominant ideology of resistance throughout the colonial and neocolonial world. Socialism spread more widely and more rapidly than any other movement in history. During much of the period in which this book was being written, it was not unrealistic to see socialism as the wave of the future, to argue that Marx's vision was indeed valid, and that the capitalist world was indeed being transformed into a socialist one, a world that lacks the oppression and poverty of capitalism.

The events of 1989, for many, make the above analysis appear unrealistic and naive (Silber 1990b). Not only has socialism been overthrown in Eastern Europe, but even the Soviet Union is undergoing changes which many believe will involve the overthrow of socialism. China, we are told, abandoned socialism over a decade ago.

The reality of these events is difficult enough to deal with, and it is understandable that many on the left have become confused and angry. We need to deal not only with the reality, however, but with many distortions and half-truths which appear not only in the bourgeois media but in the left press as well. Sorting out the reality from the distortions, and understanding this reality, is bound to be a difficult process. It is an essential task, however, and one that must be addressed in a theoretically and empirically rigorous manner.

The achievements of the socialist nations, to begin, are undeniable. Problems remain, and these problems are being addressed by these nations. But it important to keep in mind how much has been accomplished by the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century and how different the world would be without them. Fidel Castro recently observed:

In these days, when some people want to smash statues of Lenin into pieces we feel the figure of Lenin grows in our hearts and thoughts. (PROLONGED APPLAUSE)

Lenin and his ideas have meant and still mean a lot to us, who have interpreted his ideas, those of Marx and the theorists of the Revolution as they should be interpreted: in an original manner unique to each country, to each revolutionary process. These ideas retain their validity in our revolutionary process, at a time when some are frightened to call themselves Communists. There are also, in industrial quantities, those in the world who

say: "Hey! Not Communists" — what are they?

Well, they call themselves socialists, social democrats, social whatever, in short, social nothings. (LAUGHTER)

Lenin's work has endured throughout history and has helped to change the world. Lenin's work meant the emergence of the first socialist state in human history, and this state saved humanity from fascism. Without the blood shed by the Soviet people, fascism would have been imposed on the world, at least for a period of time, and all humanity would have known intimately the horrors of fascism. That first socialist state meant an advance for the peoples' liberation movements and the end of colonialism, and it meant so much to use when the imperialists wanted to destroy our Revolution, when they blockaded us and tried to starve us out. (Castro 1990:2)

The idea that socialism could be built in one nation alone, much less a "backward" nation that had not been transformed by capitalism, was foreign to the working class movement prior to Stalin's time. Faced, however, with the failure of working class revolution in the capitalist nations of the West, the Soviet Union had little choice but to undergo an independent and autonomous industrialization. This was the basis of Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country" and of the policies of collectivization and rapid industrialization in the five year plans.

Leaving aside questions as to the necessity or desirability of Stalin's policies, the fact remains that his ideas constituted major revisions of Marx's own views on socialism. Prior to this time, socialism was viewed as a consequence of industrialization, not as a way to industrialize. How do we deal with this changed situation?

One way would be to argue that, since Marx did not have any existing socialist society to analyze, and since socialist societies in Marx's original sense do not exist anywhere in the world, it is appropriate to modify his concept so that it will apply to societies that do exist. Socialism would then be defined as the society that existed in the Soviet Union from the 1930s on.

This, I believe, is an extreme and one-sided view. If our purpose as Marxists were simply to interpret the world, we might agree. But Marxists must interpret the world in such a way as to clarify the real issues confronting our species. This is essential if we are to be participants in this process of changing the world.

The major issue confronting our species is precisely the struggle between capitalism and socialism, both understood in the classic Marxian sense. Socialism, in the classic Marxian sense, does exist. It exists as a potential in the capitalist system and world imperialism. It exists as a vision which motivates the struggles of the international working class, at least its most enlightened, class conscious members. Marxian socialism, to paraphrase Marx, is a material force because it has gripped the masses in both the "advanced" nations and in the Third World. To argue that the Soviet Union from the 1930s on was socialism, pure and simple, is to abandon this older view of socialism as a vision and a potential. Although the Soviet model may have had immediate appeal to the Third World, it never excited much enthusiasm within the working classes of the United States, Western Europe, or Japan. What is needed is a new view which will preserve the original Marxian vision while incorporating the positive achievements of the Russian, Chinese, Cuban, and other socialist revolutions of the twentieth century.

It would be equally extreme and one-sided to argue that the society that existed in the Soviet Union from the 1930s on had nothing to do with socialism. Such an argument would be tantamount to saying that the only real socialism is the socialism that exists inside our heads and the socialism that was built out of the struggles of Soviet workers and peasants was somehow not "genuine." Such an idealist position may allow us to avoid taking responsibility for the actual process of revolutionary development in Soviet society, but it is indefensible from a scientific point of view.

It would be nice if we could have a revolution in which no one got hurt, in which there was complete freedom and democracy, and in which everybody was happy with the

results. Unfortunately, the search for such a revolution—which Michael Parenti called the "Emma Goldman" theory of revolution ("If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution.")—is unrealistic, as unrealistic as the search for a perpetual motion machine. As Mao stressed:

a revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an act of insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. . . . There is revolutionary significance in all the actions which were labelled "going too far" in this period. To put it bluntly, it is necessary to create a reign of terror for a while in every rural area, or otherwise it would be impossible to suppress the activities of the counter-revolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry (Mao Tsetung 1927:30).

The ruling class sustains itself through violence and will continue to use violence to preserve its wealth and privileges against the revolution.

As Marxists, confronted with the choice between the "catchwords of revolution" and the process of "revolutionary development," we have no choice but to side with the latter, to side with the poor and oppressed who demand their revolution "by any means necessary," as Malcolm X put it.

This does not mean, of course, that as Marxists we "advocate violence." Violence is an unavoidable feature of social life in general and revolutionary situations in particular. (It is an oversimplification of course, but one may say that a revolution necessarily redistributes wealth and violence. Wealth is taken from the rich and given to the poor. Violence is taken from the poor and given to the rich.) This does not relieve us of the obligation to reduce violence to a minimum. It is also impossible to have a completely germ-free environment, but this does not mean that we perform open heart surgery in a gutter.

As the first Protosocialist Nation, the Soviet Union faced a difficult situation. Trotsky, in analyzing the contradictory course of the Russian revolution, referred to the Soviet Union as a "degenerated workers' state." When the Russian working class made its revolution in 1917, the material conditions for socialism were not present. As a result of the backwardness of Russian economy and society, the relative weakness of the Russian working class, and the threat of imperialist intervention, the Russian dictatorship of the proletariat could not lead directly to socialism. Instead, it led to the dictatorial rule of a bureaucratic elite under Stalin. Despite its authoritarian excesses, however, the Stalinist dictatorship rested on essentially socialist property relations. Another, political, revolution would be necessary to overthrow the new bureaucratic caste and return the workers' state to the control of working class.

Trotsky's analysis, of course, has not been widely accepted, but it highlights a key feature which is crucial for a Marxian understanding not only of the Soviet Union, but also of other post-revolutionary societies. All of these revolutions, whatever their peculiarities, have occurred in essentially similar sorts of material conditions which include a heritage of backwardness and a threat of imperialist intervention. These similar material conditions produce similar social structures in the post-revolutionary period.

These material conditions will continue to exist until the world imperialist system itself have been overthrown. As long as imperialism exists, there will be a threat of imperialist intervention. Thus, even though the Soviet Union has industrialized, it has not escaped the material conditions of protosocialism.

Thus, just as there are two kinds of society within the world imperialist system, so there are two roads out of that system and into the world socialist society of the future. These roads are diagramed in the upper portion of Figure 5.1. The Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations will no doubt follow the lines predicted by classical Marxian theory: working class revolution, a dictatorship of the proletariat, and a fairly rapid transition to socialism. In the Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations, which lack the material conditions presupposed by Marxian theory, socialist revolution leads, not to socialism, but to

Protosocialist Nations which have the historic function of developing the productive forces of the revolutionary societies while protecting themselves from outside intervention.

These two roads are interdependent. The appearance of Protosocialist Nations heightens the contradictions within world capitalism and therefore affects the development of the revolutionary forces in the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations. Further, protosocialism is historically limited. Working class revolutions in the overdeveloping nations would end the threat of imperialist intervention and thereby radically alter the material conditions of the Protosocialist Nations.

#### **8.IV. THE LAWS OF MOTION OF PROTOSOCIALISM**

Protosocialist Nations, then, emerge as parts of the world imperialist system break away and begin to build a new socialist order. Protosocialist Nations are not fully socialist, however. They have inherited a legacy of backwardness and remain threatened by imperialism. On this basis, the Protosocialist Nations develop new contradictions of their own, contradictions which can only be resolved after the final overthrow of capitalism.

The fact that the earliest socialist revolutions did not occur in the "advanced" capitalist nations, nor in independent societies, but rather in the underdeveloping parts of a world capitalist system leads, first of all, to a heritage of backwardness. This means that: 1. the forces of production are unevenly developed as parts of a world imperialist system; 2. the working class is relatively weak and therefore not the dominant force in society; and 3. the bourgeois institutions of democratic elections and political freedoms are weakly developed. The material base for socialist is therefore not present.

This same fact leads to the threat of imperialist intervention. Imperialism cannot accept the existence of independent socialist nations. The international bourgeoisie must, accordingly, seek to overthrow independent revolutionary governments. The most immediate threat of capitalist counterrevolution was, of course, immediately after the Russian revolution, but the threat has remained real throughout the course of all progressive revolutions in the modern period.

A further characteristic of Protosocialist Nations is that they all develop out of social revolutions led by Communist Parties associated with the Third International. These revolutions resulted in decisive breaks with world imperialism, so that the Protosocialist Nation gains control over the economic surplus formerly appropriated by the imperialist nations. Further, the power of the old parasitic ruling classes, both the semi-feudal landowning classes and the compradore classes tied to imperialism, is broken, and the surplus formerly appropriated by these classes becomes available for economic growth. Consequently, the Protosocialist Nation, led by its Communist Party, gains control of the growth potential of the old underdeveloping society which was formerly harnessed to the economic growth of the imperialist nations.

It is within this set of material conditions (backwardness, the threat of imperialist intervention, and a strong state led by a determined Communist Party) that the laws of protosocialism operate.

The most basic of these laws is economic development and modernization. These are necessary both to provide a modern defense establishment, as required by the threat of imperialism, and to raise the standard of living of the masses, as required by the ideology of socialism.

In the West, the initial stages of capital formation and economic development, what Marx called the "primitive accumulation of capital," were financed by the plunder of the Third World and the forcible expropriation of the European peasantry.

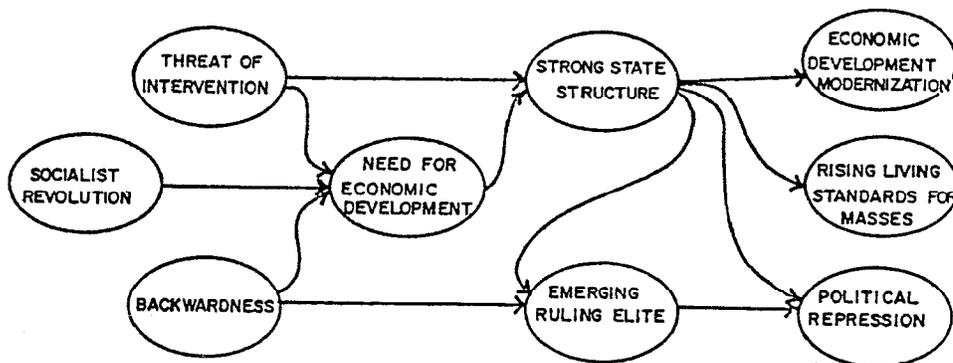
For the emerging Protosocialist Nations of Russia and China, capital formation through colonial plunder was not a possibility. Consequently, internal sources of growth

had to be tapped. In the Soviet Union, this was accomplished through what has been termed the "primitive socialist accumulation" during the "Second Russian Revolution" of the late 1920s. Urban industrial growth was financed by the forcible expropriation of the kulaks, the forcible collectivization of agriculture into State Farms, and the continued extraction of surplus from the countryside.

All of this required a powerful coercive state apparatus. The existence of a coercive state, in turn, leads to the emergence of a new elite. As Marx and Engels argued, noted in *The German Ideology*, a high degree of development of the productive forces is essential for socialist equality, because without economic abundance,

this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their world-historical, instead of local, being) is absolutely necessary as a practical premise: firstly, for the reason that without it only want is made general, and with want the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced. (Marx and Engels 1846:24)

This is precisely what has occurred. Those who control the surplus necessary for economic development are able to divert some of this surplus for their own elite consumption. Thus, what Marx saw as "all the old filthy business" emerges as an inevitable concomitant of the world revolutionary process in which "backward" nations must take the lead in developing socialism. We may condemn this in moral terms if we like, but it must be understood as flowing, not from the moral defects of individuals, but rather from the structural characteristics of protosocialism.



**Figure 8.1. The Laws of Motion of Protosocialism.**

As discussed in the text, the laws of motion of protosocialism operate within a definite set of material conditions, most notably a underdeveloped productive system and a threat of imperialist intervention and counterrevolution.

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Such are the laws of motion in the extraction and use of the economic surplus in protosocialism. As diagramed in Figure 8.1., the operation of these laws generates the contradictory features of protosocialism as a social order. On the one hand, indigenous control over the economic surplus permits rapid economic growth and dramatic improvement in the material well being of the population. On the other hand, those who control the state are able to provide for themselves a higher standard of living and thus maintain inequality within the growing equality of the Protosocialist Nation.

The Protosocialist Nations account for one third of the world's population and nearly 20% of world GNP. Conditions within the Protosocialist Nations vary. In the Warsaw Pact nations (the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist nations) the average GNP per capita is \$5480, the literacy rate is 99%, life expectancy is 72 years, and infant mortality 25 per thousand. In China, GNP per capita is only \$300, the literacy rate is

69%, the life expectancy is 63 years, and infant mortality is 97 per thousand. In Cuba, GNP per capita is estimated at about \$1000, literacy is 95%, life expectancy is 73 years, and infant mortality is 19 per thousand (World Bank 1983:148-201).

Whatever their faults, Protosocialist Nations have been the human needs of their members better than Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations or the capitalist system as a whole. Most Marxists "know" this, and may even be able to provide some statistics from a favorite Protosocialist Nation documenting it, but there has been surprisingly little effort to document this belief in any systematic way. A notable exception has been provided by the research of Shirley Cereseto (Cereseto 1982, Cereseto and Waitzkin 1986).

In her study of global inequality and basic human needs, Cereseto uses World Bank statistics (which may be assumed not to be biased in favor of capitalism) on income and the quality of life in both capitalist and socialist nations to test the two most important aspects of the Marxian paradigm: the law of capitalist accumulation, and the prediction of improvement following a socialist revolution. Her findings may be briefly summarized.

Cereseto finds that the increasing inequality that has characterized the entire career of civilization, has intensified since WWII, with increasing degradation, misery, and denial of the basic human needs of a large and growing portion of humanity. While the population of the world was increasing by 60% from 1950 to 1975, the total production of wealth was increasing faster, from \$1 trillion in the late 1940s to over \$6 trillion in 1975 and more than \$9 trillion in 1978! But although wealth was increasing faster than population, poverty was also increasing, so that in one decade of rapid economic growth (1963-1973), the number of seriously poor people in the world increased by 119 million, to 1.21 billion people, or 45% of the entire capitalist world. Thus the poverty and misery of Third World peoples, Cereseto finds, are not caused by overpopulation or "backwardness" (as the bourgeoisie would have us believe) but rather are consequences of the fundamental law of motion of capitalism:

Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital. (Marx 1867:645)

Cereseto divides capitalist nations into three categories, based on GNP per capita: rich, middle income, and poor. She finds, not surprisingly, that the physical quality of life is better in rich nations than in poor nations.

What is significant is that socialism improves the physical quality of life and better meets the basic human needs of its members than does capitalism. All socialist nations fall within the middle income category based on GNP per capita, even though many were desperately poor before their revolutions. Cereseto uses a variety of statistics on such things as inequality, infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy, and health care and finds that: 1. the socialist nations, all middle income, do better than the capitalist nations taken as a whole in meeting the basic human needs of their members; 2. the socialist nations do far better in meeting these human needs than do capitalist nations with the same resource base (i.e. middle income capitalist nations), and 3. socialist nations do about as well as rich capitalist nations in meeting basic human needs. Cereseto also finds that, while inequality is increasing both within and between capitalist nations, inequality is declining both within and between socialist nations.

Cereseto's findings, then, confirm the central tenet of Marxism: socialist revolutions are in fact good for human beings. With their social ownership of the means of production, the Protosocialist Nations have been able to eliminate the mass poverty, starvation, and ignorance generated by the capitalist system and have begun to create more egalitarian societies.

Protosocialism, however, is not a free and democratic social order. (Neither, for that matter, are the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations.) Freedom and democracy, in the

bourgeois senses of these terms, are luxuries which cannot be afforded by any nation under threat of subversion and invasion. The Protosocialist Nations are no different in this, and use whatever means at their disposal to protect themselves. Although this may offend the sensitivities of liberal critics used to the "freedom" of the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations, it is unreasonable to expect that things could be much different.

However, political repression in the Protosocialist Nations is certainly no greater than it is in capitalism. In the capitalist world, there has been increasing institutional violence, political assassinations, and state-sponsored torture paralleling the growth in economic inequality since WWII (Chomsky and Herman 1979:8, citing Amnesty International 1975). By contrast, most observers, both Marxist and non-Marxist, would agree that political repression has declined in the socialist world since Stalin's time. Although there has been no systematic study of the relative severity of repression on a world scale comparable to Cereseto's study of inequality and human needs, it is likely that such a study would produce equally striking results.

Such, at least, is the implication of the careful studies of Albert Szymanski (1979, 1982, 1984). Using the data of Western Sovietologists (who may be assumed not to be prejudiced in favor of the Soviet Union), Szymanski found that there was much more political freedom, democracy, and effective participation in the Soviet Union than most bourgeois scholars acknowledged, and that the Soviet working class probably exerted more effective freedom and control than do the working classes of the United States or other overdeveloping nations. It is not, thus, a question of "freedom" versus "totalitarianism", but rather of the structural locus of such freedom, and of what class interests are being served.

Szymanski concludes that the Soviet bureaucracy served the interests of the Soviet working class as well as our own bureaucracies serve the bourgeoisie (and much better than Western bureaucracies serve the working class). The Soviet Union, in other words, is an authentic dictatorship of the proletariat.

Szymanski's conclusions on the relative power of the Soviet working class, clearly, are at odds with the opinions of many other observers, such as Charles Bettelheim (1985). But regardless of which view one accepts on this issue, it is difficult to accept Bettelheim's view that the Soviet Union is capitalist. Soviet workers, with guaranteed jobs, free health care, and free education, are in a much better position, structurally, than workers even in the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations. And there is quite simply nothing in the protosocialist world to be compared with the mass poverty and starvation of the Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations. The underlying structure of the Protosocialist Nations is fundamentally different than that of capitalism.

Such, in broad outline, is the theory of protosocialism. Capitalism, while expanding the productive potential of humanity, is getting progressively worse in terms of meeting the human needs of our species. The Protosocialist Nations, whatever their faults, are making progress in meeting these needs and in eliminating poverty, ignorance, and inequality.

The above analysis, based heavily on the research of Cereseto and Szymanski, was completed prior to the unfolding of the current crisis in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Rather than being falsified by this crisis, however, I believe my analysis can help us understand the nature of the crisis.

## **8.V. PERESTROIKA AND THE PROTOSOCIALIST NATIONS**

This view of the world revolutionary process unfolding in the three main arenas of class struggle—the imperialist nations, the oppressed nations, and the socialist nations—provides an essential framework for understanding the world from the first World War through the mid-eighties. In the late eighties, however, the revolutionary process has undergone a remarkable transformation, and it is not yet clear what forms it

will take in the nineties. The year 1989 was an important watershed during which we saw on our TV screens the massive demonstrations, possibly the most massive in history, in Tienanmen square, the refusal of the Peoples Liberation Army to act against the demonstrators, and the eventual repression by the Beijing government. We also saw the upheavals in Eastern Europe and the destruction of the Berlin Wall. In early 1990, we saw the electoral defeat of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the transformation of the Soviet Union into a multi-party state. The next few years promise equally dramatic changes. All of this forces a re-examination of our views of the world revolutionary process.

From the standpoint of the international bourgeoisie, these events signal the defeat of socialism. Robert Heilbroner, for example, writing in the January 23, 1990 issue of the *New Yorker*, states:

Less than seventy-five years after it officially began, the contest between capitalism and socialism is over: capitalism has won. The Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe have given us the clearest possible proof that capitalism organizes the material affairs of humankind more satisfactorily than socialism. (Heilbroner 1990:98)

While the international communist movement does not concur with Heilbroner's view, it has not provided a generally acceptable alternative. Irwin Silber, who in the past has provided what might be called a hard line Marxist-Leninist view of the world, has this to say:

Marxism-Leninism has been mortally wounded. One would have to sever completely the relationship between theory and practice to conclude otherwise.... As a coherent framework for understanding the world and providing a revolutionary strategy to change it, that theory has exhausted whatever potential it may one have had. (Silber 1990b:4)

Clearly, the world in the 1990s is going to be a quite different place than it was in the past. While it is no doubt premature to offer a definite analysis of the still unfolding transformation of the world revolutionary process, it is essential to try to sort things out, and understand the transformation as it is occurring.

To begin, the apparent victory of capitalism cannot be cause for rejoicing, not for the vast majority of our species that live in the oppressed nations, not for the working classes of the imperialist nations, not for people who care about the environment, not for people that care about peace and justice, in short, not for anyone but the international bourgeoisie.

However, socialism is neither dead nor defeated. The socialist nations—or, as they may more properly be called, the protosocialist nations—are undergoing dramatic, revolutionary changes which will result in a very different kind of socialist world in the twentyfirst century. To understand the transformations of the present we must understand the transformations socialism has already gone through.

Socialism began as an ideal. The evils of capitalism caused the visionary thinkers of the early nineteenth century to devise utopian models of a social order that would incorporate the benefits but transcend the shortcoming of capitalism. This utopian socialism was transformed into scientific socialism by Marx and Engels. By the end of the nineteenth century this scientific socialism had achieved a hegemonic position within the working class movement. According to the orthodox socialism at the turn of the century, the "advanced" nations could build socialism through electoral means, rather than by violent revolution, while the "backward" nations would have to undergo a period of capitalist development before they became ripe for a socialist transformation.

This orthodox socialism was totally unprepared to deal with the cataclysm of the first World War. The socialist parties of the Second International supported their own ruling classes and encouraged the workers to wage world war rather than class war.

Lenin, however, was prepared for the war. Armed with the theory of imperialism and a vanguard party, Lenin led the Russian proletariat, in alliance with the peasantry, to a victorious socialist revolution. The revolution was successful in "backward" Russia

rather than the "advanced" nations of England, France, or Germany because Russia was the weakest link in the world imperialist system at that time. The working classes of the imperialist nations, in particular the labor aristocracies, had been bribed into reformism and acceptance of imperialism. Only in Russia, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik party, was the working class able to seize and hold power.

But a revolution is worth nothing, according to Lenin, unless it is able to defend itself. Shortly after the October revolution, the imperialist powers, including England, France, the United States, and Japan sent troops into the Soviet Union and financed a civil war which caused untold suffering for the Soviet people. After Soviet power emerged victorious from this civil war, the imperialist powers organize a *cordon sanitaire* to isolate and weaken the Soviet republic of workers and peasants. By the 1930s, fascism was on the rise in Central Europe, and it became clear that another world war was inevitable and that the Soviet Union would once again become the target for imperialist invasion. Under the leadership of Stalin and the Communist Party, the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union prepared for the impending showdown with fascism by the collectivization of agriculture and a massive industrialization drive. As the threat of invasion intensified, the dictatorship of the proletariat became more repressive, and all those who were even suspected of being potential enemies of socialism were candidates for arrest and exile to the notorious *gulag*. The resulting police state apparatus, like the purge trials of the 1930s and the Stalin-Hitler pact, are of course repugnant. In evaluating them, however, we need to bear in mind Engels's comments on the reign of terror during the French Revolution:

We think of this as the reign of people who inspire terror; on the contrary, it is the reign of people who are themselves terrified. Terror consists mostly of useless cruelties perpetrated by frightened people in order to reassure themselves. I am convinced that the blame for the Reign of Terror in 1793 lies almost exclusively with the over-nervous bourgeois, demeaning himself as a patriot, the small petty bourgeois beside themselves with fright and the mob of riff-raff who know how to profit from the terror. (Engels 1870:303)

The "crimes of Stalinism" did not flow from Stalin's personality, nor from the nature of Bolshevism, but were rather responses to a very real threat from imperialism. Whether they were necessary or legitimate responses, of course, is another question altogether. But they were effective (though again, the question of whether they were the most effective possible responses is an open one). At the cost of over twenty million dead and untold suffering and destruction, the Soviet Union emerged victorious from World War II.

The aftermath of WWII, however, was not a world at peace but the intensification of the international class struggle. The forces of revolution in Europe and Asia were strengthened by the destruction of war, and the forces of reaction, centered in the United States, were determined to retain and extend their control over the world capitalist system.

No sooner had the war ended, than imperialism launched another campaign against the Soviet Union. This campaign was military, political, economic, and ideological. Using its nuclear monopoly, the United States developed the strategic Air Command whose purpose was to launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. The Marshall Plan and other economic measures were used to re-build the capitalist economies of Western Europe and tie them to the United States economic system. The Central Intelligence Agency was organized to combat communism throughout the world in general and to subvert the Soviet Union in particular. A massive ideological campaign was developed to discredit socialism in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.

The Soviet response to these threats, again led by Stalin, was to establish loyal governments in those areas occupied by the Red Army after WWII, Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. The Red Army was prepared to launch an invasion of Western Europe in response to a possible nuclear

attack by the United States. As Marzani put it, "The stalemate was implicit: bomb Moscow and we'll take Paris" (1990:11).

By 1949, the Soviet Union developed its own nuclear capability, and the arms race (or what has been called the "arms chase") was on. In Yugoslavia and Albania, partisan forces, led by communists, established socialist governments after WWII. In China, the Peoples Liberation Army, led by Mao Tse Tung, was victorious and established the Peoples Republic of China in 1949. The Vietnamese Revolution, led by Ho Chi Minh, lasted from 1945 to its victory in 1975. The Cuban Revolution, led by Fidel Castro, was victorious in 1959.

By the 1960s and 1970s, then, a bipolar world had emerged, with the forces of imperialism centered in the United States, and the forces of socialist revolution centered in the Soviet Union. It made sense to view the world during this period in terms of "the 'three revolutionary currents of our time' (the contradiction between the socialist and capitalist camps, the national liberation struggle, and the struggle of workers against capital in the advanced industrial countries—with the socialist/capitalist contradiction primary)" (Gough 1990:4). This view, Gough notes, is now "out of date." Although the collapse of communist governments in 1989 clearly signaled the end of an era, there were earlier indications that such a view was overly simplistic and optimistic. The unity of the socialist camp had already been replaced by a polycentric communism with the split between Moscow and Yugoslavia and the Sino-Soviet split. The view that national liberation struggles would automatically lead to the defection from world imperialism and the joining of the socialist camp was challenged by the Iranian revolution. The struggle of workers against capital in the imperialist nations had already become reformist with the emergence of Eurocommunism. Within the imperialist camp also, divergent tendencies were appearing, with increasing rivalries between the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. Clearly, as *CrossRoads* argues, "It's a Whole New World Out There ..."

Or is it? Liberation struggles are continuing in the oppressed nations, with the ANC in South Africa, the *intifada* in the occupied territories, and the FLMN in El Salvador. Workers in the imperialist nations must still struggle against capital. And socialism is not dead in the Soviet Union. *Perestroika* is, after all, essentially a process of socialist renewal which was initiated by the Communist Party and, as Gorbachev notes, the leading role will continue to be played by the Communist Party:

The party, which is society's consolidating and vanguard force, has a unique role to play in this process. Those who strive to use the difficulties of the transition period for certain unseemly purposes and try to undermine the influence of the party should know that they will not succeed. We are sure that with all the critical sentiments concerning the activities of some or other party committee or communists, the working people realize perfectly well the importance of the party of Lenin for the fate of socialism, which today is inseparable from the success of perestroika. On the other hand, it is clear that the new tasks call for a deep renewal of the party.

By restructuring itself, getting rid of all that hinders its activities, overcoming dogmatism and conservatism, mastering a new style and new methods of work, renewing its personnel, and working side by side with the working people, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union will be able to fulfill its role of the political vanguard of society. The party will firmly pursue the policy of perestroika, heading the revolutionary transformation of society. (Gorbachev 1989b:7)

It is a mistake to write off the CPSU. The outcome of its current struggle in the Soviet Union will continue to have a major impact on communists the world over. As Gorbachev notes concerning perestroika:

It is of revolutionary importance to the destiny of the country you call a superpower. Once it is implemented, you, your governments, parliaments, and peoples will soon deal with a totally different socialist state.

This will have a salutary impact, an impact on the whole of the world process.  
(Gorbachev 1989a:711)

In short, it is premature to say that socialism is dead. Socialism is undergoing a revolutionary transformation which involves adopting some elements of capitalism but a wholesale adoption of capitalism is unlikely. What is more likely is that a renewed socialism, environmentally sound and with political freedoms, will once again become a model for revolutionary social change.

## 8.VI. POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The theory of protosocialism has important political implications, for it can help us better deal with the "existing socialisms" whose defects are so frequently used against the very idea of socialism. We are painfully aware of these defects, and would like to distance ourselves from them. But we are also aware of the positive achievements accomplished by the historic revolutions of the twentieth century, and need to draw strength from them in our own struggles. Perhaps this contradiction within our own struggle may be resolved by understanding the contradictory nature of protosocialism.

The Protosocialist Nations must be viewed dialectically, in terms not only of what they are, but what they have been and what they are becoming, and in terms of their interconnections with the global sweep of modern social change. When the Protosocialist Nations are compared with what they have been (Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations), their defects do not loom so large. When it is realized that the Protosocialist Nations are attempting to deal with their defects, and are doing so much more effectively than either the Overdeveloping or Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations, these defects are seen as transitory phenomena, rather than as permanent blights and indictments of the very idea of socialist revolution.

Most importantly, the Protosocialist Nations must be understood in their interconnection with the global transition to socialism. The protosocialist road which is imposed upon the revolutionary movements of the Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations is not the road that will be followed by the working class in the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations. A working class revolution in the United States, for example, will probably not face a threat of imperialist invasion. Our revolutionary working class will be able to appropriate a highly developed productive plant and well developed institutions of democracy and political freedom. This is not to say, of course, that there will be no problems, merely that these problems will be different than those faced by the revolutionary leaderships of the Protosocialist Nations. And since Marx has been correct in so much more of what he said about the nature of modern social change, there is every reason to suppose that he will be shown to be right by the working classes of the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations.

There is thus nothing in the experience of the Protosocialist Nations that would justify rejection of our Marxian vision that a dictatorship of the proletariat in the United States could be democratic and open, and could use the tremendous productive potential unleashed by capitalism to effect the transition to socialism both rapidly and smoothly. Indeed, the achievements of the Protosocialist Nations, viewed in proper perspective, confirm our convictions in this regard.

The theory of protosocialism, then, sees not one but three types of modern society: Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations, Underdeveloping Capitalist Nations, and Protosocialist Nations. Accordingly, modern class struggle, which in its most abstract form is the struggle between capitalism and socialism, takes three more concrete forms.

In the Protosocialist Nations, class struggle is directed primarily toward protecting these nations from imperialist attack and counterrevolution, and toward developing the productive potential in order to better meet the needs of the masses and continue to provide protection from imperialism.

In analyzing these struggles, it is essential to distinguish between the particular policies pursued by the leaderships of these societies and the underlying structure of the societies themselves. An analogy may be useful. We can debate the merits of the particular style of football played by the L.A. Raiders as much as we like, but this does not alter the fact that they are playing U.S. style football and not soccer, the football of the rest of the world. From an anthropological perspective, it is the structural differences between U.S. football and soccer that are significant; without understanding these differences one cannot meaningfully debate the pros and cons of particular styles of either football or soccer.

In world politics, bourgeois tacticians may discuss the merits and demerits of dealing with Nicaragua—invasion, blockades, economic pressure, or even cooperation—as alternate ways of preserving the global system of capitalist property relations. Similarly, there are alternative strategies for fostering the economic growth required by the Protosocialist Nations. These are better understood as differing routes to the same goal than as "right" or "wrong" policies, as is too frequently done.

We of course need to evaluate in a critical manner the particular economic, political, and social policies pursued by the leaderships of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, and other revolutionary societies. Such criticism, however, must be analytically distinguished from the taxonomic problem of understanding the structural nature of these societies. For this, we need to understand the inner structural nature and laws of motion of the emerging socialist world.

Thus, to take a worst case scenario, even if we disagree with Soviet policy in sending troops to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, this does not discredit the achievements of the Protosocialist Nations, nor the idea of socialism. There is nothing in the nature of protosocialism or of revolution which guarantees that leaderships will always follow the correct policy.

Although it is not essential to the theory of protosocialism, I should stress at this point that I cannot join the critics of Soviet policy in these instances. The critics, particularly if they are Marxists, have an obligation to say just how they think the Soviet Union should respond to popular movements in East Europe that want to re-evaluate participation in the Warsaw Pact, or to a CIA-financed counterrevolution in Afghanistan (for sympathetic discussions of Soviet policy in these areas, see Line of March 1982b, Silber 1980).

In the Underdeveloping Nations, class struggle takes the form of movements of national liberation against imperialist domination and exploitation. Such movements aim toward gaining control of the surplus which is being extracted by the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations so that it can be directed toward independent national development and meeting the needs of the masses in the Underdeveloping Nations.

In the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations, class struggles are more complex. The struggle for peace and social justice, in solidarity with the class struggles in both the underdeveloping world and the protosocialist world, is of course central. Opposition to all forms of imperialism is perhaps the most basic way of expressing solidarity with the international working class. The struggles for democracy and social justice within the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations are also crucial. As Marxists working within such struggles, we must above all act to develop a socialist consciousness within the working class. The theory of protosocialism makes an important contribution to furthering such consciousness.

The theory of protosocialism stresses that there are different roads to socialism, and that the road to socialism followed by the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations will be quite different from that followed by the Protosocialist Nations. This can help combat the virulent anti-communism infecting the working class. At the same time, the positive achievements of socialist revolution even under the adverse conditions of the underdeveloping nations gives some indication of the potential achievements of a socialist revolution in the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations, where conditions are much

more favorable to socialist construction. The theory of protosocialism thus both preserves and strengthens the classic Marxian theory of socialism.

## **8.VII. THE REVOLUTION IN THE IMPERIALIST NATIONS**

Viewed from a purely national standpoint, the prospect of socialist revolutions in the overdeveloping capitalist nations may seem remote. But this changes when we understand that capitalism is a world system. Clearly, the world capitalist system is undergoing a revolutionary transformation from capitalism into socialism, even though the nations that consider themselves the most "advanced" technologically are politically the most backward in this revolutionary process.

### **8.VII.1. Class Struggle in Capitalism**

Clearly, then, the working class, even in the "affluent" United States, has no interest in preserving the capitalist system. Our interest lies, rather, in wresting control of the productive potential of America from the bourgeoisie and using this potential to benefit everyone

Equally clearly, the ruling bourgeoisie has every interest in preventing this. The ruling class wants to preserve the capitalist system that serves them so well, even though it condemns millions of workers to poverty and squalor. The ruling class wants to preserve its military domination of the Third World in order to protect its investments, even though this condemns millions of peasants and workers in the Third World every year to starvation and billions more to a level of poverty scarcely imaginable to middle class Americans. The ruling class wants to preserve its nuclear threat against the Soviet Union, even though this threatens also the very existence of our species.

Now, although it may appear that the power of the ruling class is so great that it will continue to dominate the future as it does the present, history suggests that this is not so. The power of ruling classes has always been challenged by the oppressed. The Marxian model of class society is fundamentally a *two* class model in which change results from the struggle of two contradictory classes, bourgeoisie *and* proletariat. As the *Communist Manifesto* stresses,

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. (Marx and Engels 1848:2)

It is crucial to understand that our present institutions are not simply products of the capitalism, but rather products of class struggle. We may look briefly at some aspects of this struggle in the United States.

### **8.VII.2. Working Class Struggles in the United States**

Clearly, as Americans we enjoy personal and political freedoms and material abundance far exceeding those of any other nation. In the popular view, these are rights we and our ancestors won through hard work and individual struggle to improve our conditions in the land of opportunity. This conception is actively promulgated by our mass media and educational system, which link individualism, consumerism, capitalism, and freedom together in the American Way. This, however, is a very one-sided view of American history. It tends to ignore the dark side of American history: the extermination of the American Indian, the enslavement of blacks, and the oppression of Latinos, Asians, and workers generally. It ignores also the very real history of organized class struggle by the working class.

If the capitalists had their way, we would all still be working from dawn to dusk for near-starvation wages, without Social Security, retirement benefits, or unemployment insurance. We would not have the right to vote, nor would we have our public education system. Our conditions, in short, would resemble those of workers in Third World nations. The benefits we do enjoy as Americans are very largely products of organized working class struggles.

The history of working class struggles in America is a hidden history. Although our history books may mention such things as the peace and civil rights movements of the Sixties, the Great Depression of the Thirties, and even the I.W.W. and Eugene Debs, the role of the working class in forming our American institutions is virtually ignored. As workers, Americans are thus cut off from their own history.

Clearly, it will be impossible to correct this shortcoming here, and the reader is urged to consult such works as *Labor's Untold Story*, by Boyer and Morais (1955), *Strike*, by Jeremy Brecher (1972), *The Labor Wars*, by Sidney Lens (1974), and *Seven Women: Portraits from the American Radical Tradition*, by Judith Nies (1977). What we can do, however, is mention some of the more important aspects of working class struggle in the United States, and how they have contributed to forming our American institutions.

The first upsurge of the working class occurred in the 1825-37 period, as unions developed among printers, building workers, shoe workers, textile workers, bakers, tailors, seamen, and longshoremen. Central trade councils were formed in New York and other cities, and national unions were formed, culminating in the first national labor federation, the National Trades Union in 1834. The working class also organized politically, with Workingmen's Parties forming in New York, Philadelphia, and other cities. The crisis and panic of 1837 destroyed the emerging working class movement, but not until it had achieved significant gains which were to have a lasting effect on American institutions. In addition to higher wages, improved working conditions, and, in some places, the ten-hour day, this early working class movement established such basic institutions as the free public school system, universal manhood suffrage, the abolition of imprisonment for debt, and the right to strike.

The working class continued to organize and struggle before and after the Civil War. Of particular importance during this period was the Knights of Labor, organized, in the words of its founder, Uriah S. Stephens, with the basic objective of "the complete emancipation of the wealth producers from the thralldom and loss of wage slavery" (Foster 1951:332). The Knights of Labor advocated the organization of the entire working class, including unskilled workers, blacks, and women. The Knights of Labor reached a high of 600,000 members in 1885-86, but declined sharply after it opposed the great eight-hour day strike of 1886. Over 350,000 workers were involved in this historic strike, which gave birth to the international workers' holiday, May Day.

Unlike the Knights of Labor, which attempted to organize all workers, the newly organized American Federation of Labor concentrated on skilled, white, male workers. Under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, the AFL sought only higher pay for its own workers, opposed political action on the part of labor, opposed even unemployment insurance, and supported the increasingly imperialist foreign policy of the United States.

In 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World was formed. The IWW, or "Wobblies," attempted to organize all workers, including unskilled, black, and women workers, into One Big Union, with the objective of overthrowing the capitalist class. The IWW led a number of significant strikes and free speech movements, but declined after many of its leaders were imprisoned for opposing WWI.

The period from the Civil War to WWI was one of bitter class struggle. The employers fought the emerging unions with every means at their disposal,

including ruthlessly aggressive employers' associations, shops and factories built as forts and armed with big arsenals, elaborate plant spy networks, savage checklists of militant

workers, discharge for union membership, armies of gunmen and professional strikebreakers, company unionism, the antiunion ("open") shop, court injunctions against strikers, the use of troops against strikes, the violent suppression of basic civil rights, the frame-up and imprisonment or execution of working class leaders, etc. (Foster 1951:330)

Of the many strikes and general strikes during this period, the Great Upheaval of 1877 is particular noteworthy (and largely ignored by history books):

On (July 16, 1877) the first nationwide strike in history broke out on the railroads, a strike which spread from state to state and city to city, from West Virginia to Kentucky and Ohio, from New York to Chicago, from St. Louis to San Francisco. As fast as the strike was broken in one place it appeared in another. American troops fired on American workingmen as regiments under General Phil Sheridan were recalled from fighting the Sioux and thrown against the workers of Chicago. There was the Battle of the Roundhouse in Pittsburgh, bloody street fighting between troops and workers in Baltimore, and skirmishes the country over in which scores of workers were killed and hundreds wounded.

From the first day of the strike the press declared it was a Communist conspiracy to overthrow the government by force and violence. It was not. It was the depression exploding. It was four years of humiliation, joblessness, and hunger erupting in struggle.

Women were particularly valiant as the strike spread, hurling stones as they stood against the fire of United States regulars. Children were killed in Pittsburgh and elsewhere as they fought militia. Farmers came trooping in from the countryside to help the strikers, whose ranks were swollen by the unemployed, by coal miners, mill workers, by all the thousands whose lives had been made uncertain and bitter by depression. (Boyer and Morais 1955:59)

The strike was put down after two weeks, but not until it had struck fear into the hearts of the capitalist class, who began to construct National Guard Armories in the major cities of the United States. These grim fortresses of brick and stone were built to protect America, not from foreign invasion, but from the working class. They are thus monuments to the Great Upheaval of 1877 (Brecher 1972:1,22).

Thus, well before the emergence of the major struggles of organized labor in the 1930s and the peace and civil rights movements of the 1960s, there was a long history of working class struggles which had a profound impact on American life and institutions.

This history of class struggle in the United States is largely ignored by standard history textbooks. As a result, few workers are aware of the history of their class, a history that includes the early workingmen's parties of the 1930s, the Knights of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) in the 1930s. The relative affluence, social welfare programs, and freedom enjoyed by workers in the U.S. are not simply products of the capitalist system, but rather results of the struggles of workers against that system.

As we shall see in the next section, a realistic assessment of contemporary class struggles shows that, while the possibility of ruin is certainly present, the capitalist system is indeed undergoing a revolutionary transformation into socialism.

### **8.VII.3. Socialist Revolution in the United States**

Workers in the overdeveloping capitalist nations, and U.S. workers in particular, seem most reluctant to embark on any kind of challenge to the bourgeois status quo. This is not, a permanent condition, for class consciousness can change rapidly. As late as January of 1917, Lenin remarked that he did not expect to live to see the impending social revolution, yet a few months later he led history's first socialist revolution.

Social change in the United States can occur quite rapidly, and U.S. history has been marked by periods of rapid change interspaced with longer periods of tranquility. Thus the ferment of the 60s was preceded by the tranquil 50s, and labor's radical upsurge in the 30s was preceded by the conservative 20s. In 1850, few would have predicted the overthrow of the slave system within 20 years, and in 1760, few would have predicted our

national liberation from British imperialism. Thus, no matter how conservative our national mood may appear, we cannot discount the possibility of a socialist revolution by the end of the twentieth century.

A detailed consideration of the revolutionary process in the contemporary United States is of course beyond the scope of this work, but some general remarks on the probable course of a working class revolution are essential.

First of all, a working class revolution means that the working class will become the ruling class. The working class must wrest control of the state and the productive resources of society from the bourgeoisie. Reforms, such as higher pay, more social services, better health care, and so forth, are important, but as long as the capitalists retain power, such reforms will be precarious at best.

For this reason, the crucial step in the revolution must be the expropriation of the capitalist class, depriving them of their control over the economic, political, and cultural life of the nation. Precisely how this will be done is not clear, but a reasonable first step would be the take-over of the top 500 industrial and financial corporations. This would give the working class control over the "commanding heights" of the economy, so that social need rather than profit maximization could form the basis for economic decision-making. This need not involve major economic disruption. The so-called "managerial revolution" has already separated ownership from direct control, but profit maximization continues to be enforced by bourgeois boards of directors and the stock market. Replacement of the bourgeois boards of directors with socialist directors elected by the workers and general public, and replacement of the stock market with social policies determined through the democratic process, would constitute a "structural revolution," dramatically altering the nature of economic processes.

The question of compensation for the current owners of these corporations could be handled in a variety of ways. Marx was of the opinion that it would be easiest to simply buy the rascals out. While this is probably true, there is no moral necessity for doing so. Further, there is the danger that the ex-capitalists would use this wealth to finance a counterrevolution. What will likely be done is to provide stipends to enable the expropriated bourgeoisie to lead decent, even affluent, lives, provided they do not engage in counterrevolutionary activities.

With control over the economy and the state apparatus, the working class could pursue definite policies to heal the wounds left by capitalism. Such policies would no doubt include:

1. Guaranteed jobs at decent pay. This of course is in the interest of everyone who works for a living. It would eliminate poverty and the fear of poverty. The elimination of poverty would, in turn, eliminate the social conditions which breed crime and delinquency. Such ills, of course, would not disappear overnight, but social forces would be working toward their amelioration rather than their perpetuation.

2. Elimination of nuclear weapons, a clear necessity if humanity is to survive, socialist or capitalist.

3. A peaceful foreign policy, based on non-intervention. Current foreign policy, which claims to protect "freedom," in fact serves the interests of the multinational corporations and only protects their freedom to make profits wherever they like. The working class does not benefit from maintaining dictatorial regimes in the Third World, nor would the working class have anything to lose if other nations decided to adopt communism.

4. Massive social programs to rebuild our cities, and guarantee health and welfare benefits to all members of society. Such policies will include definite policies to eliminate racism and sexism.

5. Preservation of our democratic freedoms and institutions. Our electoral system and free press will be preserved and perfected, so that it reflects the will of the majority, rather than the wealthy elite.

6. Protection of the environment. The major threat to the environment lies in the profit motive of capitalism. Environmental problems will not end, of course, with the overthrow of capitalism, however, so definite policies to eliminate pollution will be necessary.

In each of these six areas, there are organizations and forces at work in present society. Their efforts can only be reformist as long as the structure of society remains capitalist. With socialism, such efforts can be effective in creating a better society and a better world.

It should be stressed that the whole point of a socialist revolution is to eliminate existing inequality and injustice while preserving the best features of bourgeois society, such as our personal freedoms. Contrary to right-wing paranoia, there is no significant political force, inside or outside the U.S., that advocates the imposition of a Soviet-style system in the United States.

## **8.VIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Human societies do not exist in isolation. They exist in interpenetrating relationships with other societies within the total flow of human history. They contain both the remnants of past social orders and the seeds of future orders.

Human societies, therefore, cannot be understood in isolation. They must be viewed in dialectical perspective within the total flow of human history, and as both products of past conditions and potentials for the future. The theory of protosocialism, in attempting to apply these principles to the understanding of one type of modern society, can shed light on the understanding of modern social change in general.

Where does protosocialism lead? What is its probable future evolutionary trajectory? The answer, I think, is that protosocialist states are definitely on the road to socialism but cannot arrive there until all other societies join them. The process of socialist renewal currently underway in the Soviet Union has the potential of moving forward into a new phase of protosocialist society. It also carries with it—as do all revolutionary changes—the dangers of capitalist restoration and civil war. Far from contradicting Marx's views on the communist future, the actual course of world revolution and its attendant crises and contradictions confirm Marx's views on this matter.

Protosocialism is a response to a particular set of material conditions, and may be expected to last as long as these material conditions exist. It is no doubt within the power of the peoples of the Protosocialist Nations to build modern industrial systems which will serve them better than any other social order in history. This will, of course, take generations, and during this time world capitalism will also be changing.

We do not know, and cannot know, what the future trajectory of world capitalism will be. But the possibility cannot be discounted that, as predicted by Marx, the working classes of the Overdeveloping Capitalist Nations will take control over their own destiny and embark on the road to socialism. Such a development would certainly transform the material conditions faced by the Protosocialist Nations and would radically alter their evolutionary trajectory as well. Only the future will tell.

Our task, however, is not simply to await that future, but to provide the clarity of social thought that will assist the working class in building a socialist future. The theory of protosocialism is offered to help provide that clarity.