

## The Soviet Union and the World Communist movement

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[Editorial note: *International Forum* was a publication of the Marxist-Leninist Organisation in Canada In Struggle! Four issues appeared in 1980/81. It took the initiative of reproducing various statements from other organisations reflecting the ideological and political struggle within the international anti-revisionist organisations in the post-Mao period.

In an accompanying text, MLOC In Struggle! provides a synopsis of the contending assessments of the nature of Soviet society and the role of the Soviet Union in their commentary, "The American left analyses the Soviet Union", that appeared in the same edition of *International Forum*.]

## Editorial by International Forum

# The Soviet Union and the world communist movement

For the last twenty years, one of the most basic points of unity among communist forces around the world has been their criticism of the phoney "socialism" of the Soviet Union and their opposition to the revisionist line of the Soviet leaders and their international supporters. Today, this unity is increasingly put into question. Most communist organizations and parties still criticize Soviet-type "socialism" and still denounce the Soviet line as revisionist. But although the same words are used, the real meaning that is given to them is becoming very different...

In fact, there are two distinct trends that are developing concerning the role of the U.S.S.R. in world affairs and the kind of socialism that the Soviet Union stands for. Many communist forces see in contemporary world events a confirmation of the need to militantly oppose the policies and actions of the Soviet leaders. They see the U.S.S.R. arming itself for inter-imperialist war — and using these arms for its imperialist interests in Afghanistan. They see in the Polish struggle the starting point for a revolutionary struggle against the state-capitalist regimes in the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European countries. They react to the set-backs in the struggle for socialism — especially the triumph of the capitalist road in China — by working harder to understand the roots of revisionism in the formerly socialist countries, including in the U.S.S.R.

But many other communists are taking the road of increasing conciliation with the Soviet Union, with what it does, and with the kind of society it represents. They secondarize or ignore the imperialist actions of the U.S.S.R. and they concentrate on giving their support to the liberation movements fighting U.S. imperialism — movements that are often being courted by the Soviet Union and its allies. What they find in the Polish workers' struggle is a chance for "socialism" to be democratized and reformed. Faced with the theoretical problems posed by the difficulties and defeats for the proletarian revolution in a number of countries where the working class took power, they simply capitulate. They want us to return to the romantic myth of one big happy socialist camp, a strange sort of socialist paradise where revisionist leaders run free to carry out their plots against proletarian revolution while the "socialist" economic base remains untouched.

Communists have to firmly oppose this growing trend to conciliation with Soviet imperialism and Soviet-type state capitalism. Those who ignore or deny the reality of Soviet

imperialism cannot build a real internationalism, even on the level of world-wide anti-imperialist solidarity. Those who pretend that socialism still exists in the U.S.S.R. and its Eastern European neighbours are not only spreading confusion on the nature of these societies. They are also deforming the very meaning of genuine socialism as a period of working-class rule and transition to communism.

But fighting this opportunist trend is not simple or easy. This battle presents some very real challenges for communists around the world.

It is within the struggles and movements that face American (and Western) imperialism as their main enemy that we find the most sympathy for the Soviet Union and its allies (like Cuba). So communists who are serious about exposing the real nature and role of the U.S.S.R. are going to have to learn how to do real education within the revolutionary and anti-imperialist movement fighting U.S. imperialism. And a pre-condition to doing such education is that the communists give honest and effective support to these struggles. Too many communist forces still want to take the easy way out on this question. Some reduce their education on the role of the Soviet Union to support for those movements — in Afghanistan, in Eritrea, etc. — that are already engaged in militant struggle against the U.S.S.R. and its allies. Others adopt a completely leftist and sectarian posture towards the revolutionary forces that do not recognize the U.S.S.R. as an immediate enemy, insuring in advance that their "pure" positions will never be listened to or discussed.

If communists are going to expose the role and nature of the U.S.S.R. they will have to raise the theoretical level of their analysis and debates on these questions. There is nothing in the current debates to seriously challenge the basic understanding that the Soviet Union acts as an imperialist power, or that Soviet-type socialism is in fact a society based on exploitation and repression of the working class. But there is much which puts into question some of the superficial and dogmatic ways that Marxist-Leninists have developed this analysis. What is needed today is to develop our understanding of the societies like the Soviet Union to the point where it represents a comprehensive understanding of the basic laws of motion that are particular to these social formations. The best way to make progress towards this kind of understanding is through a serious exchange and debate among the Marxist forces who share this basic goal.

### Editor's note

*Other than those written by IN STRUGGLE!, the articles and documents reproduced in this publication do not necessarily reflect IN STRUGGLE!'s positions. We have taken the initiative of reproducing these texts because we consider that they are of interest in the ideological and political struggle being waged among the forces who are struggling to demarcate from revisionism in their country and in the world.*

*As well, the articles reproduced have been chosen by IN STRUGGLE!, in certain cases at the suggestion of those who wrote them. We intend to develop this type of collaboration as much as possible so that the content of International Forum will not depend solely on the knowledge and capacities of our organization.*

# The Soviet Union today

## Comments on the debate on the nature and role of the Soviet Union... Presentation by International Forum

For over twenty years now the question of the nature and role of the Soviet Union has been one of major importance for the communist and revolutionary forces around the world. But recent developments both in the world situation and in the world communist movement have also given a particularly sharp and lively character to the debates on this question today. That is why we have chosen this question as our main theme for this issue of **International Forum**.

When we began to prepare this issue we knew that it would be impossible to deal with all the important questions and debates concerning the nature and role of the U.S.S.R., especially in a situation where we are making an overall assessment of problem for the first time. What we have tried to do instead is to provide a selection of texts that give an overview of the most important debates going on **right now** within the world revolutionary movement, concerning both the role of the Soviet Union in world affairs and the different theories and criticisms of Soviet-style "socialism".

The first text, from the MAPU-Workers Party of Chile, provides an analysis of a very important recent event in world affairs: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The next two texts deal with the nature and role of Cuba, a country that plays a key role as an ally of the Soviet Union, especially in Latin America and Africa. The article from the American anti-imperialist newspaper, the **Guardian**, takes up the defence of Cuba against the aggression of U.S. imperialism, based on the view-point that Cuba is a revolutionary socialist state practicing militant internationalism. The analysis of Cuba by IN STRUGGLE! of Canada is quite different. Their article examines the recent decisions of the 2nd Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in order to contest the idea that Cuba is still on the revolutionary path. It focuses on the capitalist nature of economic management in Cuba, and on the ways in which the Cuban party's international policies are based on collaboration with those capitalist and imperialist forces who have contradictions with U.S. imperialism.

The next three articles provide different view-points on the Polish workers' struggle — a subject that has been very widely discussed in the revolutionary and communist press around the world. The first two articles show the depth of the disagreements that exist among communist forces concerning their attitude towards this struggle. The newspaper **Que Hacer** from Venezuela analyzes the demands of the Polish workers as legitimate, but says that the Solidarity unions and their leaders are reactionary forces allied with American imperialism. This position represents a partial demarcation from the views of the Party of Labour of Albania (and its followers), who condemn the basic demands of the Polish workers as well as their leaders and independent unions. The document from Proletarian Democracy in Italy represents a view-point which is completely different from these analyses and which has had wide-spread support among different kinds of communist and revolutionary organizations. They give their militant and enthusiastic support to the Polish workers' movement in its present form, and see in the move-

ments' recent victories a real step forward towards a genuinely socialist and revolutionary movement in the Eastern European countries. The next article on Poland is taken from the newspaper of **En Avant Proletaires** in France, and deals with the question of the nature of Polish society. The French comrades take on the opportunism of the revisionists in the French trade unions who pretend that the struggles and victories of the Polish workers prove... the socialist nature of the Polish regime! Their polemic is important, because this kind of argument is widespread in the trade-union movement in the West, where the Polish workers' struggle has won important sympathy and solidarity. But it is also quite relevant to a number of communist forces internationally who are also pretending that Polish "socialism" is being reformed through the pressure of mass struggle.

The last two articles are of a somewhat different character, being devoted to an overview of the current debates among Marxist and communist forces concerning the nature of the Soviet Union and Soviet-type "socialism". The first, prepared by **Forum**, looks at the debates in the American communist movement on the nature of the U.S.S.R. The second, taken from **Ethiopian Marxist Review**, takes an analytical and critical look at the theories of Marxist dissidents in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries. These two texts together provide some idea of the theoretical debates that are taking place concerning a Marxist understanding of these societies.

Here are what seem to us to be the most important questions and conclusions that we can draw out from studying these texts....

### The Soviet Union as an imperialist power

There are still a great many anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces that refuse to speak out on the imperialist nature of the U.S.S.R. It is not at all uncommon to find revolutionary organizations who will struggle against the class collaborationist and reactionary policies of their "own" revisionist party, but who are very tentative or even completely silent, when it comes to the reactionary role of the Soviet Union in world affairs.

The analysis of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by the Chilean comrades provides a good example of how this kind of thinking must be challenged. Their article shows clearly both the imperialist nature of this invasion, and as well the opportunist nature of the arguments used to justify it. When this article criticizes those sectors of the Chilean left that refused to condemn this Soviet aggression, it is in fact criticizing a whole trend within the world revolutionary movement.

There is another kind of thinking that obscures the imperialist role of the Soviet Union and the reactionary role of its allies, like Cuba. The **Guardian** article represents this view-point quite clearly. The **Guardian** will admit that the Soviet leaders are "revisionist" and their foreign policy sometimes reactionary — as in Afghanistan. But they insist on **mainly** judging the international role of Cuba, and the Soviet Union, by one criteria: their opposition to U.S.

imperialism and their support to the forces fighting American domination. This way of looking at the alignment of world forces is quite wide-spread, and particularly strong among the revolutionary movements that confront U.S. imperialism as their main enemy.

The basic problem in the **Guardian** line lies in the **method** by which they analyze the world situation. Their position reduces the struggle against imperialism to the struggle against the most powerful imperialist country — for the **Guardian**, that country is the USA. With this method, the **Guardian** simply ignores the **class nature** of other states and forces in conflict with U.S. imperialism.

Of course the Soviet Union and Cuba give a certain kind of aid to different liberation movements that fight against American imperialism. So do the West German imperialists. The question is why do they do this? Is it really a form of internationalist aid that will strengthen the proletarian revolutionary forces? Or is it not, in fact, one tactic that is used to weaken their American imperialist rival and to gain influence over the future revolutionary governments that may be created?

It is also true that the prestige of the Cuban State throughout Latin America is based on some real economic and social gains of the Cuban revolution. But this kind of revolution cannot be understood without examining its bourgeois democratic (capitalist) nature. This is true for Cuba in the past, or for governments like Nicaragua today. The fact that the Cuban economy is in increasing crisis, or that the Cuban State is allied with the reactionary policies of the U.S.S.R. around the world, cannot be detached from the fact that the Cuban revolution did not continue forward on the socialist road. And even if the revolutionary government in a country like Nicaragua is today a progressive force, the fact remains that the battle over the future consolidation of genuine socialism remains to be fought out in this country as well. To simply accept the "socialist" label that these governments give themselves only creates confusion about the problems that revolutionaries must clarify.

All of this leads us to the general question of the Soviet Union as an **imperialist** power. For the last twenty years Marxist-Leninists have maintained that capitalism has been restored in the U.S.S.R. and that this process was accompanied by the transformation of the Soviet Union into an imperialist power. Today this theory is increasingly under attack. It has been discredited among many revolutionary forces because of its association with the reactionary Chinese "three worlds theory", a theory that called for collaboration with Western imperialism and reactionary third world regimes in the name of fighting the Soviet menace. It is also a theory that has been weakened by dogmatic interpretations, such as the idea that the Soviet Union represents "fascism of the Hitler type", or that the Eastern European countries are simple colonies of the U.S.S.R.

But the fact remains that the theory of the Soviet Union as an imperialist power remains the only revolutionary theory which attempts to explain the reactionary role of the U.S.S.R. in world affairs in a **materialist** way. How else do we explain the Soviet Union's building up of a massive military force designed for **offensive** purposes, and its use of this force in countries like Afghanistan? How else can we understand the use of Cuban troops to battle the Eritrean liberation forces who threaten the (pro-Soviet) Ethiopian State? How else can we explain the friendship between the U.S.S.R. and fascist dictatorships like those of Turkey and Argentina? How else can we understand why the Soviet

Union not only supports state-capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe, but is prepared to use its tanks to crush the workers' revolt against these regimes? What is most striking about all those forces that contest the theory of Soviet social-imperialism, is that they have no theory at all to explain these things.

### The Polish struggle and Soviet-style socialism

The Polish struggle has provoked massive sympathy and support from progressive and revolutionary forces around the world. It has also revealed the total disunity that exists among communist forces when it comes to analyzing the class struggle and revolutionary perspectives in this kind of society.

Some communists oppose the struggle as reactionary, at least in its present form. The only proof they offer for their position is the fact that there are reactionary ideologies and leaders which have influence in the struggle, and that the Western imperialists are trying to profit from the struggle. This happens to be true... not only for Poland, but for most mass and working class struggles around the world. But what is more important is that these arguments are used to oppose the Polish workers' basic demands, particularly their demands for independent trade unions and for political liberty. These demands would be supported by these same communist forces if they were put forward in any Western or third-world capitalist country. So why are they reactionary in Poland?

Other communist and revolutionary forces give their militant support to the Polish workers' struggle, but see it leading to an improved and reformed "socialism. We are led back to the same fundamental question. What do communists really mean when they call Polish society "revisionist"? Do they mean that it is a capitalist society that must be changed through working-class struggle and proletarian revolution? Or do they mean that it is a kind of deformed socialism, a society with a socialist structure and opportunist leadership, a society whose socialist remnants must be defended... or reformed?

We think that any analysis of the Polish struggle must start from the understanding that Polish "socialism" really is a form of **capitalism**. The workers' struggles and demands are legitimate and progressive. They are rooted in the class exploitation of the Polish workers. The victories won will improve the conditions of struggle. But the partial victories won will not resolve the situation of grave economic, social, and political crisis in Poland, a crisis rooted in its exploitative social system. The debate on the workers' immediate struggles and demands must be pursued. But this disagreement should not blind us to the importance of another fundamental question, the question of the path to proletarian revolution in a country like Poland.

### Some theoretical questions

Historically, two main theories have been put forward within the world revolutionary movement to criticize the Soviet Union and Soviet-style socialism. The Trotskyists have analyzed these societies as degenerated workers' states, countries which maintain a socialist economic base but whose corrupt leadership must be overthrown in a "political" revolution. Marxist-Leninists have analyzed that a capitalist system has been fully restored in the formerly socialist Soviet Union.

Today, there is a wide range of Marxist thought which analyzes the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European countries as

exploitative and class-divided societies, but which challenges these two theories in their interpretation of the nature and laws of these social formations. This debate poses some fundamental questions that must be confronted seriously by revolutionary forces who want to develop a coherent and convincing theory of these societies.

One of the challenges to both the theories of bureaucratic degeneration and capitalist restoration comes from those who emphasize the historical **continuity** of the problems of the Russian revolution. They bring up the question of political democracy and working-class power under socialism, questioning the basic role of the Bolshevik party as a ruling party. They also bring up the problem of the role of the development of the **productive forces** in limiting or encouraging the development of genuine socialism. Returning to the original Marxist proposition that socialism and the transition to communism would take place in those societies where capitalism had greatly developed the productive forces, they contest the possibility for real socialism to be built on the basis of backward societies, like Tsarist Russia at the time of the October Revolution.

Another element in the discussion comes from those who maintain that the classical economic laws of Marxism for capitalist society do not apply to the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European countries. The implication of this position seems to be the need to develop a Marxist political economy for a type of social formation that presents certain new historical features, different from either traditional capitalism or genuine socialism.

### **A debate to be pursued**

All of the questions that we have brought out here are of the greatest theoretical and practical importance for the world revolutionary movement. We intend to continue this discussion in the near future in the pages of **International Forum**, possibly in another issue devoted completely to the discussion we have begun this time.

We hope that we will have contributions that will help us go further in the debate on the fundamental nature and laws of societies like the U.S.S.R. We also would like to have texts that deal with certain specific questions that require deeper analysis:

- the economic role of the U.S.S.R. in today's world and the material basis of its imperialist policies;
- the nature of the pro-Soviet communist parties and revolutionary movements; the ideology of these parties and the question of Euro-communism; the problem of tactical alliances with these forces in the anti-imperialist struggle and workers' movement;
- the path to revolution in countries like the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the nature and role of the workers' movement and the existing political opposition in these societies.

Our ability to develop this debate in a useful way depends on your contributions. We want texts for reference, to understand the most important debates taking place and the main theories and positions being discussed. We want texts for publication, whether from your organization or from others that you know of. And we want your comments on the texts and opinions that we have presented in this issue.

## Important debates on the nature of the U.S.S.R.

Throughout the decade of the 1970's, the general ideological and political leadership of the Chinese and Albanian communist parties was widely accepted among the anti-revisionist forces working to build a new communist party in the U.S.A. This was clear in relation to the question of the U.S.S.R. in particular: the most important Marxist-Leninist organizations put forward that capitalism had been fully restored in the once-socialist Soviet Union, and that the U.S.S.R. was now a social-imperialist and social-fascist State. In the period of 1974-1975 two important books were published that defended and elaborated on this position.

One of these was **The Restoration of Capitalism in the U.S.S.R.** written by Martin Nicolaus, a Marxist academic active in different Marxist-Leninist organizations. The book begins with a brief history of the Soviet revolution up to the period of the Second World War, and analyzes that up to this point the revolution had produced a powerful socialist State with a healthy economy and with the proletariat in firm control. Nicolaus maintains, however, that the objective basis for capitalist restoration already existed at this point, with its social basis in opportunist and careerist party leaders and factory managers, and with the material basis for these pressures lying in the continuing existence of capitalist forms of economic management in both agriculture and industry. He also maintains that Stalin's denial of the continuing class struggle under socialism made the struggle against the danger of capitalist restoration more difficult.

It is in the latter part of his book, however, that Nicolaus' analysis becomes more developed and more original. Basing himself on Soviet as well as Chinese and American sources, Nicolaus paints an elaborate picture to explain exactly **how** capitalism was restored. The drama begins immediately after the death of Stalin in 1953, with a very bitter but very secret fight between Marxist-Leninists and revisionists that remains confined to the highest levels of the party leadership. The victory of the revisionists, led by Krushchev, leads to the public slander of Stalin and the repudiation of the most basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, as well as a massive purge over the next few years of the honest elements in both the higher levels and the rank-and-file of the party. With this accomplished, the capitalist-roaders proceeded over the next ten years to the systematic wrecking of all that was once socialist in the economy of the U.S.S.R.

According to Nicolaus, the role of central planning was abolished, with enterprises being given freedom to operate as competing units and with profit performance as decisive. This occurred not only in industry, but also in agriculture, where the State farms were given possession of the own means of production. The means of production were made into commodities that could be bought and sold between enterprises. Labour power also became a commodity again, with the fact that managers had increased rights to hire and fire workers, to tie wages to productivity, and to earn bonuses based on the enterprises's profit. Accompanying all of this was a

### Analysis of the USSR

## The American left analyzes the Soviet Union

Over the past decade the revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces inside the U.S.A. have remained very sharply divided in their assessment of the nature of Soviet society and of the role of the U.S.S.R. in today's world. Not only is the literature defending the different analyses quite extensive in the U.S.A., it is also on a quite high level of analysis and polemic.

The following article, prepared by *International Forum*, gives a brief portrait of some of the most important of these debates. To the best of our knowledge, these positions are quite representative of the different currents of thought concerning the U.S.S.R. that exist in the revolutionary movement internationally. So we hope that our readers will find this article useful in terms of a general outline of the various kinds of analyses of the Soviet Union that are currently being debated by the communist and anti-imperialist forces around the world.

"trustification" of the economy into monopoly-like cartels, and a capitalist re-organization of the State-controlled banking system.

The results of all this, says Nicolaus, were the reintroduction into Soviet society of all the traditional evils of capitalist society — cyclical economic crisis, massive unemployment, growing inflation, and a continually growing gap between the wealth of the new rulers and the poverty of the working masses.

The second important book defending the capitalist restoration was published in the same period by the Revolutionary Union (forerunner to the RCP, USA). It is entitled **Red Papers 7: How capitalism has been restored in the Soviet Union and what this means for the world struggle**. On the history of the Soviet revolution under Lenin and Stalin, and on the economic nature of the restoration of capitalism, the theses in this book are essentially the same as those of Nicolaus. But the book places a much greater stress on the role of politics and ideology than on the economic changes in the U.S.S.R. For example, Red Papers 7 is more elaborate on the role they give to errors by Stalin: along with the denial of the class struggle under socialism, it also stresses Stalin's responsibility for over-emphasizing the role of the productive forces and failing to develop the initiative of the human factor in socialist construction, and for further holding back the mass struggle against bureaucracy by sometimes dealing with contradictions among the people as antagonistic. The theory and practice of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China are put forward as the method to correct Stalin's errors and fight capitalist restoration.

Red Papers 7 also differs from Nicolaus' book in that it tries to put forward a comprehensive view of the role of the U.S.S.R. as an imperialist power in the world. It argues that the Soviet Union colonizes Eastern Europe and exploits the underdeveloped third world countries like India; with the only difference from Western imperialism being that it relies more on unequal exchange (terms of trade) than on direct capital investment. Red Papers 7 also argues that the inter-imperialist rivalry between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. is the main source of the danger of world war. The political conclusion of this analysis is the call for a world united front against the two superpowers.

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The theory of capitalist restoration as represented in these two books was the dominant trend of thought concerning the Soviet Union among forces working toward an anti-revisionist communist party. But it was far from being uncontested. Many anti-imperialist and revolutionary activists remained unconvinced by the restoration thesis, while seeing themselves as united mainly in their opposition to U.S. imperialism. These kinds of forces have developed a kind of "general line" which puts forward that American imperialism is the main enemy of the world's peoples; that the main contradiction is between U.S. imperialism and the liberation struggles; that the Soviet leaders are revisionist in their general line and wrong in particular policies (Afghanistan, Poland); but that the U.S.S.R. remains both part of the socialist camp and an important ally of most liberation movements. The influential **Guardian** newspaper has generally defended this line over the last few years. As well, many local anti-imperialist organizations in the U.S.A. hold to this position, such as the **Resist the Draft** Committee.

A more theoretical opposition to the capitalist restoration thesis has come from some American Marxist intellectuals,

with the work of Paul Sweezy of **Monthly Review** providing the most developed alternative analysis of Soviet society. Sweezy's analysis of the U.S.S.R., and of other countries that took up the socialist road, has led him to some original conclusions concerning these "post-revolutionary" societies.

For Sweezy, a society like the Soviet Union is neither socialist nor capitalist in classical Marxist terms. Nor is it a transitional society where the forward progress to socialism is blocked by the bureaucratic rulers — as the Trotskyists maintain. Rather it represents a historically new type of social formation that must be analyzed in its own right.

If the U.S.S.R. is not socialist, for Sweezy, it is because of the position of the workers in this society. They have no political power. They remain propertyless wage-slaves that are exploited and controlled by a self-perpetuating ruling class; even if they have won important economic rights through the revolutionary process. Sweezy agrees with his French colleague Charles Bettelheim that this new ruling class was consolidated in the 1920's and 1930's, after the proletariat was decimated in the civil war, and as the interest of the new managerial elite began to predominate in the party.

But Sweezy's argument also lays great stress on the differences between Soviet society and traditional capitalism. He maintains that two main ingredients of capitalism are missing in the U.S.S.R.: the ownership of the main means of production by private capitalists, and the division of the unit of production into independent and competing entities. He also maintains that the role of planning remains determinant for the greater part of the (state-owned) economy; and that the laws of capitalism (law of value, of capital accumulation) are only decisive in the sectors of privately-owned agriculture and in the (growing) black market, so, for Sweezy, both planning and profit co-exist in the U.S.S.R., with the role of planning still dominant in the over-all functioning of the economy.

For Sweezy, the societies like the U.S.S.R. play a historically progressive role for the less developed countries in so far as they resolve certain basic economic problems: land reform, development of industry, improvement of the economic conditions of the working masses. But they do not solve the basic problem of a proletarian socialist revolution — that of the establishment of the political power of the working class and the development of social production controlled by the producers. And these societies face serious problems of economic stagnation as they develop; because they have neither the political methods of genuine socialism nor the economic methods of traditional capitalism to develop greater productivity.

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More recently in the U.S.A., the theory of capitalist restoration in the U.S.S.R. has come under very heavy attack from different Marxist-Leninist forces and organizations that had previously supported it. This is clearly related to the fact that this theory was directly identified with the Chinese "theory of the three worlds", which made the Soviet Union the main enemy of the world's peoples. The opposition to the three worlds theory was naturally particularly strong from the revolutionary left within the U.S.A.. And the repudiation of China's leadership has produced great ideological confusion for many American communists; as well as creating an opening for pro-Soviet forces to attack the very idea that the U.S.S.R. is either capitalist or imperialist. An idea of the depth of the crisis in the American communist movement can

be seen from the fact that the Communist Party M-L, the party officially recognized by China, is in the process of completely falling apart, and has been debating in its own newspaper such questions as whether the U.S.S.R. is really socialist, and whether Mao Tsetung Thought was ever really relevant to the imperialist countries....

One of the books produced in this recent offensive against the capitalist restoration thesis is entitled **The Myth of Capitalism Reborn: A Marxist Critique of Theories of Capitalist Restoration in the USSR**. The book was written by two communist militants who set out to prove with more facts the restoration thesis, but who became convinced through their research that the theory didn't hold water. The book is interesting in that it tries to directly refute the most developed theories for capitalism restoration (Nicolaus, *Red Papers 7*, *Bettleheim*); and in that the author's arguments are accompanied by a wealth of factual information on Soviet society, drawn mainly from U.S. and Soviet government sources.

The authors of this book develop two separate lines of argument: the first against the mainly "economic" restoration thesis (Nicolaus); the second against the mainly "political" thesis (*Red Papers 7*, *Bettleheim*).

In combatting the "economic" theory of restoration, the authors develop an analysis similar to Sweezy's. They amass different statistics to try to show that the economic laws of capitalism do not really apply in the U.S.S.R.: for example, that the economy is run on planning and not mainly on profit, that there is no "boom-and-bust" cycle to the economy, that there is no industrial reserve army of labour, etc..

The authors also combat the "economic" theory of restoration on one of its most basic theses: that the social system in the U.S.S.R. changed in a **qualitative** way between the period of Stalin's leadership and the period of Krushchev's power. They maintain that most of the economic problems that exist in Soviet industry and agriculture can be shown to have existed **continually** since the October revolution, and, if anything, to have been partially resolved in the 1950's and 1960's — so that the mere existence of these problems under Krushchev's rule doesn't prove anything about how the economy has fundamentally **changed**. They also try to repudiate the idea of a massive purge of the party leaders and members under Krushchev, with statistics that show that such changes were relatively minimal compared to the resignations, expulsions, and executions among the Bolshevik party members and leaders during the 1930's.

The second line of argument of this book is against the theory that capitalist restoration is demonstrated by the dominance of a revisionist line in the party (and the State run by the party). The authors criticize this trend of thought as an idealist departure from Marxism, a deviation that makes the line and action of political parties and leaders determinant in relation to the material foundations of a society. They also claim that the proponents of this thesis have implicitly created a non-Marxist definition of capitalism, a definition that makes capitalist any hierarchical society in which workers sell their labour power.

These kinds of arguments in this book are both provocative, and useful in stimulating study and reflection, in so far as they are accompanied by factual research that can be critically analyzed. But the over-all political orientation of the authors remains confused and confusing, and this has

quite negative effects on both the analysis they make and the conclusions they draw. The authors essentially ignore the exploitation of the Soviet workers, reducing their socialist rights to those of economic planning and job and material security. They admit that there is an "elite" in the U.S.S.R., but dismiss without serious arguments the idea that it is a ruling class. They minimize the degree of capitalist forces that do exist in the economy and the pressures to develop them more, and even dismiss the possibility of a capitalist-style economy being introduced with the feeble argument that it would "go against the logic of the system". They admit that the Soviet party leaders are revisionist in their domestic and international line; but nowhere can they explain the material basis for this.... instead, they maintain that the logic of the collectivized economy will assert itself against the revisionist leaders. And since the factual portrait that they draw of Soviet society is in complete contradiction with the definition that the authors themselves give to genuine socialism (at the beginning of the book), the authors are left with the conclusion that the U.S.S.R. is still in transition.... to socialism.

It is undoubtedly these political confusions that mean that this book can be so noisily promoted by the Line of March organization, a militantly pro-Soviet "party-building" organization that is currently doing propaganda for support to the struggles of the Afghan people and the Polish workers — in the form of more Russian tanks.

But the kind of arguments put forward in this book are clearly having a real impact among American communist forces. For example, the Communist Workers Party has just announced the publication of a new book, entitled **The Socialist Road**, which will basically revise this party's positions on the question of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and China. According to this party's newspaper, the book argues for a break with "idealist" conceptions of socialism and the transition to socialism, an idealism that was typified by the left of the Chinese communist party during the Cultural Revolution. The book will try to show that the Soviet Union (and China) continue to be socialist and to form part of a socialist camp; and that their revisionist leaders operate relatively independently of the material basis of these societies.

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