

## *PROSPECTS FOR SOCIALISM*

The Soviet people built the first socialist state under immense obstacles and at the cost of enormous sacrifices, proceeding without any historical precedent or blueprint. The economy, politics and all other aspects of life in the first workers' state were shaped by the strains and efforts of fighting singlehandedly against a world of enemies. In the final analysis, therefore, the most painful features of the Soviet first stage of socialism, its violence, errors and excesses, arose not out of the ideals of socialism but out of the implacable aims of world imperialism.

Although the period between 1917 and 1922 has commonly been called the stage of war communism, it might be more accurate to extend this term to include the entire first stage of socialism—through sometime between 1950 and 1955.

An historical turning point was reached when socialism ceased being an island in an ocean of capitalism and became an ascendant, self-sufficient world system, while the capitalist world sector lost its overwhelming economic, military and technological superiority. Plans for destroying socialism or its achievements were no longer practicable; and socialist development could no longer be obstructed by war threats.

Soviet achievements are easing the path of all countries striving for national independence. Soviet science and industry are breaking the centuries-old monopoly of the Western robber barons—a monopoly that provided them with the military and economic weapons for enslaving nations of Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Crimes under socialism differ in scope, character and duration from those under capitalism. Under socialism they have been directed during a given, limited period against a relatively small portion of the population. There has been a full exposure of the crimes, an investigation of their origin and provision against recurrence. Under capitalism there have been unending monstrous atrocities against numerous peoples and often against entire humanity; enslavement and even slaughter of millions provides the mainstay of the system. The ideologies of capitalism cloak the origin of these crimes in mysticism or cynicism.

Socialism is now capable of breaking out of the historical necessity hitherto imposed by imperialism of constantly organizing its activities in relation to the imminence of war. Unfettered by this monstrous evil, the Soviet peoples are gaining an immeasurably higher level of freedom as molders and activators of their own social order. In other words, more of what is inherent in the laws of socialist development can now assert itself.

Although socialism's new course is still in its beginnings, it marks a profound break with the past, a departure from the era of blind trust in personalities, of government by an elite and of non-participation and alienation of the masses from the exercise of state power. It may be regarded as the first step on the long road toward Engels' "withering of the state," toward the time when the educational and cultural level of the vast majority of the people will be such as to enable them to rule themselves and to enable humanity to "ascend from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom."

It should not be difficult to realize that such is the only direction socialism can follow. Its needs, goals and objec-

tives press and pull to an ever higher level of mass culture and education and hence to where more and more millions come into the possession of scientific and other tools to enable them to rely on their common analysis, judgment, initiative and creativity. Side by side with this development, free discussion must grow, with criticism and self-criticism surpassing anything under the highest stage of bourgeois democracy.

Confidence in the ultimate victory of socialism throughout the world rests on the scientific understanding of the inevitability of its surpassing capitalism in freedom and civil liberties as well as in the satisfaction of material needs.

According to all recent reports, all problems of science and society, art, literature and politics have become matters for popular discussion, criticism and evaluation in the Soviet Union and in the Peoples Democracies. Capitalist democratic institutions, policies, theories and philosophies, too, are being freely discussed and compared with those prevailing under socialism. All the socialist countries are clamoring for the exchange of students, journalists, artists, writers, political leaders, scientists and athletes with the capitalist countries. Richard M. Barzoph, a scientist of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, recently reported upon returning from a visit to the Soviet Union: "I was shown every piece of apparatus I desired to see and every scientific subject I raised was discussed with apparent freedom. Soviet scientists are anxious to get together with those of the United States and there are no security barriers in the scientific field in the USSR." (*New York Times*, July 10, 1956)

World capitalism, however, led by the United States is becoming ever more fearful of such exchanges and of the

prospect of free and open discussions between American and Soviet students and workers. Official circles are even terrified at the prospect of the American people's learning, even in a distorted fashion, about the achievements of Peoples China. This fear reflects the increasing restriction of the freedom to know and to learn in capitalist countries. Such discussions would expose the charge that socialism is inhuman and unworkable. Thus a whole sector of human experience and knowledge is "out of bounds" and "dangerously subversive" for the majority of Americans. Such restrictions cannot but lead eventually to a morbid constriction of democratic institutions.

As the return to capitalism becomes more obviously impossible, freedom to dissent grows under socialism. As the desirability and necessity for a transition to socialism becomes more apparent, freedom to dissent disappears under capitalism.

Capitalism and socialism thus present two historically opposite courses of development. The former begins with a relatively low level of centralized economic and political power with the slogan of government by and for the people. It fearlessly challenges all comers to a fair, open fight in the free marketplace of ideas. But it ends with the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a tiny, almost omnipotent minority with a mounting antipathy to government "by the people" and by punishing with jail or loss of livelihood the expression of unorthodox opinion in the "free" marketplace of ideas. It cultivates mass ignorance, low educational levels better to delude and confuse the people.

Socialism has begun with the highest centralization of political and economic power, an inexorable dictatorship of the proletariat through the Communist party, limitation

and suppression of various civil liberties and of the bourgeois free marketplace of ideas. Overcoming initial dangers and difficulties, it tends toward decentralization of government, to the easing and abolition of restrictions and to the establishment of a free marketplace of ideas based on a continual growth of the means of production, science and culture. The end result is not dictatorship but an expanding people's democratic order and its gradual transition from government for the people to one also by and of the people.

The problems and obstacles socialism is seeking to overcome are connected with its growth and the task of dislodging the old on its way forward. The difficulties and dilemmas of capitalism are due to inner decay and to immanent and insurmountable contradictions which regardless of cycles of growth and expansion doom it to disintegration and extinction.

The conclusion is inescapable that under conditions of peaceful coexistence the struggle between the two systems will take on the form of a momentous historical contest to decide which will surpass the other not only in science and industry but also in the advancement of human welfare, culture, freedom, justice, democracy and civil liberties.

Socialism is confident of the outcome of this contest. All humanity will judge.