

The Proposed Changes in Communist Organization

By Robert Minor

"In 1928 Stalin said that capitalism was entering a period of crisis from which there would be no complete recovery. Will post-war cooperation between the four major powers prove this prophecy incorrect?"

The questioner attributes this "prophecy" to Joseph Stalin. But it is not a formulation quoted from Stalin. It is the questioner's own interpretation. He probably has in mind remarks of Stalin that were published in the United States in 1928, but actually made in December, 1927, in Stalin's estimate of the fact that world production had then recovered to a point above the pre-war level of 1913. What Stalin then said was that:

"... from the fact that trade increases, from the fact that technical progress and industrial possibilities increase, while at the same time the world market, the limits of that market and the spheres of influence of various imperialist groups remain more or less stable, arises the most profound and sharpest crisis of world capitalism, pregnant with new wars and menacing the existence of any form of stabilization.



ROBERT MINOR

"From partial stabilization develops an intensive crisis within the capitalist system, the developing crisis shatters stabilization—such is the dialectic of capitalist development at the present historical moment" (at the end of 1927).

This is not the same thing as that which appears in the question at the top of this column. Stalin's is a dialectical way of putting the matter, whereas the questioner reduced it to a stiff dogma that does not correspond to the rich many-sidedness of life. But since the question, in the stiff, dogmatic form in which the questioner places it, reflects a way of thinking that crops up repeatedly in many of the questions we have received, I had better choose it for an answer. Do the facts prove such a "prophecy" incorrect?

Yes. Whoever may have made such a prophecy, it is proven to have been incorrect.

Stalin, together with Roosevelt and Churchill, as the heads of the three most powerful states in the world, joined in considering whether the necessary conditions exist for a complete recovery of world economy and of the many national economies. On the basis of known facts and the experience of the war and cooperation in the war up to this time, they came to the conclusion that the conditions for such a complete economic recovery do exist.

They exist in the resources that are now pooled for this war, if

these are still further coordinated in the peace.

The unprecedented cooperation agreed upon between the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain—and also China is a large factor—will bring about a re-establishment of the national economies of Europe, America, Asia and of other countries.

I would advise everyone not to assume that this "refutes" the Marxist view. In some of us it may refute the notion we tend to get now and then, that we already have mastered our working class treasure, the scientific method of Marxism and that we have nothing more to learn; and if we are now driven to study more profoundly the great scientific classics of our movement, so much the better.

Marxists don't operate by prophecies. Marxists adopt a scientific presumption as to the future course of events, but this is simply the universal method of science which includes a constant checking of the presumption against the succeeding events—a constant system of correction of every so-called "prophecy." Some of these hypotheses later receive such conclusive scientific support from the facts of history that they cease to be mere presumptions and become historic certainties; and the chief of these is the established historic certainty that modern society will pass from capitalism into socialism. We are not skeptics.

But fixing exact dates and forms for particular historical turns is another matter. It may be an ex-

pecting game for up-and-coming journalists, but one of the first things you learn from Marxism is that predicting the time at which particular historical trends will culminate is a foolish and fruitless one. And among the most fruitless is the effort to "prophecy" the supposed impossibility of a prolongation beyond a particular date, or of the revival of, a waning social system. We have an interesting example. A one-time figure in the Russian Communist Party, who later confessed his guilt as a secret agent of the German government, once tried his hand on the same subject we deal with here. He (Bukharin) wrote:

"Once the decline of capitalist productive relations is given, and once the impossibility of their restoration is proven theoretically, then—" etc.

Lenin underscored the words about "impossibility . . . proven theoretically," as we print them above in bold type, and commented sharply:

"The 'impossibility' is demonstrable only in practice. The author does not place dialectically the relation of theory to practice."

Only the test of practical life could prove whether it was "impossible" for the economic life of capitalist countries to recover completely. No one could foresee fully the peculiar way in which history turned. Certainly no Marxist would attempt to fix by guesswork, in the absence of objective evidence, just how precisely the trend toward

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economic and political cataclysm in 1927 would turn out. But the best of Marxists, Joseph Stalin, showed with accuracy what the dynamic forces were that would decide the matter.

But if Stalin estimated 16 years ago that capitalism was then "entering a period of crisis" — does anyone think that capitalism did not enter a period of crisis?

Secondly, if Stalin is interpreted to have meant that capitalism (i.e., capitalism *alone*) could make no "complete recovery"—what do you conclude? What makes you think it can?

Capitalism alone is not recovering from this crisis.

No single normal human being in the whole world now believes that the capitalist part of the world alone can recover from the present crisis.

No hard-headed businessman, large or small, or banker or financier, not a single trade union leader, or enlightened political leader, now believes that the economy of the greatest capitalist countries, taken together or by separate countries, but as the capitalist sector of world economy alone, can recover from the present crisis.

Why? Because the "technical progress and industrial possibilities"—to quote again the words of Stalin 16 years ago—have still further increased since 1927, and have been given a sudden new vast expansion in the present war production; while the world market, instead of expanding, bore every promise (prior to Tehran) of narrowing down after the war to catastrophic smallness. Only a few months ago the accepted view of the most prac-

tical capitalist business leaders was that the end of this war would bring a necessary decline of American production to about one-half or one-third of its present volume, with tens of millions of Americans unemployed. (I advise you to read Earl Browder's report made at the recent plenum as it appears in his latest pamphlet: *Tehran and America*.)

Only a completely new and unprecedented element in the situation now makes possible the recovery of world economy on its present basis.

Before anyone can get an objective view of this problem, one must reflect on the most profound historical changes that have come into the world. The first of these enormous changes is that the system of world economy which is largely capitalist is not entirely capitalist; for world economy now includes a very stable socialist sector in a huge, very powerful and wealthy country. As long ago as July, 1930, Stalin pointed out that "capitalism no longer represents the sole and all-embracing system of world economy."

But, in order for this change to have the effect giving stability to world economy, something more was necessary; there had to be a way of living together and of active cooperation between the socialist and capitalist economies that would bring into existence a stability and an absorption capacity in the world market that could not even be dreamed of for a capitalist economy alone.

This active cooperation is brought about by the coalition of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union as now ex-

tended through the period of military action and victory and into the post-war period of peaceful reconstruction. This cooperation makes possible the establishment of a stable and vastly extended world market, which is the only way whatever that the enormous "technical progress and industrial possibilities" can be utilized to the full without a glutted market and a post-war economic crisis.

So the fact that we do not now or after the war go into an economic crisis of world capitalism of unprecedented violence, and a period of further wars, is due to the finding of a way of living together of Socialism and Capitalism. It is due to the fact that history did not take the course that Hitler "prophesied." The Hitler plan was for a war in which the resources and manpower of all capitalist countries would be taken under German hegemony (much as those of France are now) to be hurled against what Lindbergh said was a "weak and inefficient" socialist state.

The decisive event of this historic time is the rejection of Hitler's hegemony by England and the United States and their decision to defend their independence in a gigantic coalition of these two great capitalist states with a socialist state that turned out to be, not "weak," but the most effective fighting force in the whole world.

The next question, to be answered in tomorrow's Daily Worker, is: "Can the coalition of the United States, Great Britain and Soviet Russia be a strong and lasting one in spite of the differences of social structure between the capitalist countries and a socialist country?"