

In our last issue, we discussed the contradictions that have arisen from the reversal of workers' power and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, contradictions that will inevitably lead to war as the Soviet ruling class drives to replace U.S. bosses as the world's dominant imperialist force.

The return of capitalism to the USSR has not only intensified struggle between Soviet rulers and imperialists of other nations. It has also, as one would expect, drastically worsened the living and working conditions of the overwhelming majority of the Soviet people.

Because of the enormous technological leaps that socialism made possible when the working class held power in the USSR, today's "red" bosses are able to exploit the working class at a far higher rate than their Tsarist predecessors. The ratio between profits and workers' wages in Russian industry was about 100 per cent in 1908. In 1973 it was twice that—200 per cent.

Brezhnev & Co. frequently gloat over their "scientific" organization of labor. Their model is the so-called "Shchekino experience," named for the plan put into effect at the Shchekino chemical combine. The Soviet bosses should pay Ford and GM a copyright royalty for this plan. It consists purely and simply of laying off part of the labor force and then speeding up the rest to save wages and increase "productivity." Sound familiar? The Soviet trade union paper *Trud* admitted that in the 292 enterprises which were following the "Shchekino example" in the Russian Federative Republic alone, over 70,000 workers had been laid off by July 1973.

These layoffs are accompanied by a plan to bribe the remaining workers to expand the scope of their work, do different kinds of work, and, naturally, work much harder. As in any capitalist enterprise, this speedup nets super-profits. According to the Nov. 11, 1974 edition of the Soviet paper *Communist*, every ruble paid to the workers of the Akaisk Plastics plant in "bonus" rewards for speedup resulted in a profit of 16 rubles and 60 kopeks.

In addition to this "normal" extraction of surplus value from the working population, the Soviet rulers also realize profits through taxation. The "inhabitant tax" in the USSR has been steadily increased over the past decade. The total inhabitant tax collected in 1960 amounted to 5.6 billion rubles; by 1974 it had risen to 16.7 billion rubles, roughly 300 per cent. The 1973 *Yearbook of Soviet National Economic Statistics* shows that inhabitant tax paid by the average worker's family that year represented more than 11 per cent of the combined wages of its members.

Long ago Marx pointed out that for many reasons capitalism cannot dispense with a large "reserve army" of unemployed. Such an army is now growing rapidly in the Soviet Union. A large number of unemployed workers have had to leave the Kurgan region recently to look for jobs elsewhere.

UNEMPLOYMENT GROWS

Because the bosses of Soviet enterprises have the legal right to fire workers at will and because working conditions are so atrocious in many plants and factories, many Soviet workers become part of the "floating labor force." When a worker "floats," he has an excellent chance of remaining unemployed. In 1973, the Soviet journal *Socialist Labor* admitted that the floating labor force in Soviet industry accounted for 6.5 million workers, some 30 per cent of the total. Before being re-employed, each worker remained jobless an average of 28 days, for a total of 780,000 people who had no work in a year. The figure would be much greater if statistics were available for floating manpower in the construction sector (which has been particularly slowed down recently in the Soviet Union) and others.

One would expect from the above that poverty is growing in the Soviet Union. This is the case. The Soviet journal defines "families in economic difficulties" as those whose incomes do not ensure a minimum set standard of living. Tass admitted in November 1974 that these amounted to 25 million people. One can assume that the Soviet revisionists minimize these figures in the same manner as their U.S. counterparts, and that the true number of persons living below the poverty level is much higher, especially among agricultural workers.

The inflation caused in part by zooming prices of imported Western capitalist technology is of course loaded on the backs of the Soviet working class. According to their own figures given annually

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for the National Economy of the USSR, state retail prices of meat and poultry rose 29 per cent between 1960 and 1973. During the same 13-year period, retail prices in Moscow's state-run shops went up 48 per cent for flour, 33 per cent for beef, and 66 per cent for cabbage. Free market prices rose even more rapidly. They were 35 per cent higher than in the state-run stores in 1960; by 1973, they had risen 63 per cent. Since 1973, inflation has increased everywhere in the world at unprecedented rates. It is therefore safe to assume that the figures cited above are now far higher than two years ago.

No survey of capitalist oppression in the Soviet Union or anywhere else would be complete without a look at the development of the super-profits generated by racism. Brezhnev & Co. go after these with a vengeance. There are many different national minorities in the USSR, as in the USA or any large country. Although all groups are exploited, those who bear the heaviest brunt of racism are the non-Russian minorities. According to the book *The Soviet Union and the Union Republics in 1973*, the average wage of non-Russian workers is much lower than the average wage paid to Russian workers. For example, the average wage of Byelorussian workers is 16 per cent lower; in Georgia it is 20 per cent lower; and in Mordavia it is 20 per cent lower.

The working class in the non-Russian republics suffers correspondingly from inferior goods and services, lower per capita retail sales, etc. Per capita retail sales in Uzbek, Azerbaijan, and Tajik republics were barely 60 per cent of those in the Russian Federative Republic, according to the 1973 *Yearbook of Soviet National Economic Statistics*. The number of doctors for every 10,000 people in the Central Asian republics was one-third less than in the Russian Federative Republic.

SOVIET WORKERS WILL DEFEAT FASCISM

Because of the Soviet working class' great revolutionary tradition—developed in the 1917 Bolshevik seizure of power, 40 years of socialist

development, and the heroic, victorious war to smash the Nazis, today's Soviet rulers cannot afford the luxury of a liberal-democratic shell for their class dictatorship. They are forced to rule as fascists. Strikes are illegal in the USSR. Any attempt to organize against the government—even non-violently—is illegal. Any attempt to oppose the racist policies outlined above is illegal.

However, class struggle is the law of life and must continue as long as capitalism continues. This is as true in the Soviet Union as it is in every other part of the world. According to the newspaper *Trud*, absenteeism and slow-down in 1973 resulted in the loss of some 50 million working days. Absenteeism in the building units of the Mordavian Ministry of the Countryside in 1973 reached 66 per cent of the total number of the workers there.

Absenteeism and slowdowns alone are not the best tactics for going on the offensive against the bosses. However, these facts demonstrate that the Soviet working class is not sitting still while Brezhnev & Co. roll over it. As the rulers of the USSR intensify their drive to replace Rockefeller & Co. as the world's top imperialists, they will have to turn the screws tighter and tighter on the Soviet workers. The process that we see much more highly developed today in the USA must, in essence, reach similar proportions in the Soviet Union sooner or later.

Conditions will change, especially as U.S.-Soviet rivalry sharpens and increases the danger of World War. The "red" moguls of the Soviet Union are not supermen. As they become further and further enmeshed in the deadly contradictions of their system, the Soviet working class—which has been there before—will steel its revolutionary will, reorganize its forces, build a true communist party that will learn from the achievements and errors of the past, and seize power to re-establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union.

..This development is inevitable. Workers all around the world, who must fight the same battle themselves, will greet it with the same deafening applause they accorded to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

