

V. EVERYDAY LIFE UNDER SOVIET SOCIAL-IMPERIALISM

Marxist-Leninists have only begun the kind of thorough investigation of the actual workings of Soviet social-imperialism that is needed. We offer the preceding analysis of the social-imperialist economy and the role of the Soviet Union as an imperialist power as a contribution to this investigation, but we recognize much remains that is difficult to explain. We also recognize that this kind of basic analysis, while essential, and while clearly indicating that the Soviet Union is a capitalist-imperialist and no longer a socialist country, is itself limited. We must also know more vividly what the restoration of capitalism has meant to the Soviet people in their everyday lives.

1) A Rising Standard of Living?

In confronting this question, we must hold no illusions about what socialism was like in the Soviet Union. While it brought tremendous progress and benefits to Soviet working people, and qualitatively changed the nature of work and life in society generally, socialism is not a utopia. Class struggle continues, and in the conditions of the Soviet Union great sacrifices were called for, especially at crucial points, in order for the working class to hold state power, maintain its alliance with the peasantry as the basis of that power and build the foundations of a rational, planned economy in the service of the people.

Under Stalin's leadership most of the resources of the society were invested in two areas—defense and the future. The production of the means of production, that is, of factories, machines, tractors, etc., took priority over the production of immediate necessities, and the diversion of vital resources to the production of defensive weaponry—but not of a grand imperial navy like today—was necessitated by the harsh realities of imperialist encirclement, Nazi invasion and "Cold War." Thus, the Soviet people often had to do without many of the things Americans, including many American workers, take for granted.*

*Today, while it is clear that this policy was in the main necessary and correct, perhaps too much emphasis was placed on the development of "heavy" industry to the unnecessary detriment of consumer production and agriculture. In present day China diversified light industry is being developed alongside the more dynamic sector of heavy industry. Yet here, too, sacrifices must be made in the interests of defense and balanced future development.

It would be a bit dishonest, then, for us to point an accusing finger at the social-imperialists and call attention to the present lack of adequate housing and shortages of foodstuffs or consumer durables which do exist in the Soviet Union without recognizing that these problems also existed before 1956. But it must be recognized that today these problems arise in a completely different context.

We certainly do not resent the somewhat higher material standards enjoyed by many Soviet citizens today, nor do we look down upon needed improvements from the high horse of petty bourgeois moralism as "decadent" and "corrupting" in themselves. We do, however, recognize and stress that insofar as economic advances have benefitted the working people, they are the result not of the social-imperialists' generosity, but of the legacy of hard struggle and selfless labor for the future bequeathed to today's citizenry by a generation of Soviet workers and peasants led by the Communist Party and Lenin and Stalin.

Moreover, we are fully convinced that any improvement in the general standard of living of the laboring masses can only be temporary under social-imperialist rule. Back in 1927, when bourgeois economists were jumping up and down with excitement about the "wonders" of post-war capitalist stabilization and the rising standard of living of the people, it was none other than Stalin who pointed to the illusory nature of these gains. Accurately predicting the onset of the "Great Depression" and of a new imperialist war, Stalin pointed out: "Partial stabilization is giving rise to an intensification of the crisis of capitalism, and the growing crisis is upsetting stabilization—such are the dialectics of the development of capitalism in the present period of history." The same could be said today of social-imperialism and the "successes" it trumpets to the world.

Furthermore, the kind of "improvement" which has taken place in the standard of living of the Soviet people is extremely uneven and in most important respects represents, in fact, a step backward. Under Stalin inequalities did exist and Marxist-Leninists have concluded that these were too extensive. Such inequalities included wide wage differentials between skilled and unskilled labor and higher compensation for managerial

and technical personnel. Yet overall economic development was carried out in the interest of the broad masses, and basic necessities were priced as low as possible. Where shortages did exist, rationing ensured that the poorest would not suffer most.

The development of collective, social institutions was stressed over the production of private consumption goods. Standard of living cannot be measured in gross quantitative terms like GNP or other capitalist-type production indices. The quality of life must also be assessed, as must the pattern of distribution of socially produced goods and services.

In the Soviet Union today, the distribution of wealth has grown increasingly uneven and the ruling class is in every respect a privileged elite. Expanding differentials in income are coupled with cutbacks in social services. While material standards may have improved somewhat for some, it is the bourgeoisie whose living standards have really risen. At best, the workers have managed to retain a few crumbs.

2) The Growth of Inequality

In the past Soviet production strongly leaned toward the creation of improvements which could be collectively enjoyed by large numbers of people (like theatres, public transportation, etc.), but today the production of individual luxuries, available mainly to a few, is stressed. While this may contribute to the maintenance of a rising production chart, it does little for the Soviet masses and reflects their lack of mastery over production. To produce more luxury goods, prices of consumer necessities have been raised drastically. As we noted before, between 1959 and 1965 prices of 15 major consumer items rose by 42% and even the government journal *Sovetskaya Torgovya* (Soviet Commerce), had to admit that the stores stock only expensive clothing and that many customers have complained about the shortage of cheap autumn and winter wear.²

This gives some indication of the growing tendency of the Soviet bourgeoisie to flaunt its new-found wealth in "style." The fourteen luxury cars which Brezhnev owns do not merely represent that leader's personal idiosyncrasy. We can point also to the newly developing Soviet fashion industry which is trying so hard to mimic the Diors and St. Laurents.

The Soviet press itself has noted the rising trend of officials purchasing "country homes", often former estates of the tsarist nobility. For example, the chairman of a collective farm in the Azerbaijan Republic built a 16-room villa "unrivalled in splendor" in the whole area.³ More recently, political squabbling among the social-imperialists forced exposure of the fact that Mme. Yekaterina Furtseva, a former crony of Khrushchev's and a top Soviet leader, had embezzled state funds to build what can only be labelled an extravagant mansion as her personal country dacha.

But perhaps most revealing of all, because it involves the direct exploitation of human labor, is

that in recent years many professional and official families have begun to hire what Russians call an "incomer" (prikhodiashchaia)—a personal maid. These women, like their U.S. counterparts, are paid extremely low wages and are subject to degrading treatment. Also, as in the U.S., they are frequently members of oppressed nationalities and are new arrivals from the countryside who lack training for skilled work.

In the past such women were put to work on projects of general social utility, from street sweeping to day-care, until they could be trained to enter the industrial work force. Today, they must cater to the personal need of their new rulers. And no doubt the Soviet bourgeoisie joins in chorus with their western counterparts in complaining of the shortage of "good help."⁵

One particularly glaring example of how the Soviet bourgeoisie lives "the good life" off the sweat of Soviet workers is the story of Bella Akhmadulina, the Soviet Union's leading young poetess and ex-wife of the famous revisionist poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko. She is now married to the writer Yurii Nazibar. According to a personal interview in the *New York Times*, Ms. Akhmadulina is "a millionaire." She has a full-time maid and butler, a fancy car with a chauffeur, and, of course, a country house. Enough said about the Soviet leadership's claims to be "building communism", a system where distribution of wealth is according to need!⁶

Yet such blatant flaunting of wealth can only go so far. The Soviet rulers have to keep up the pretext of working class rule. Thus, a system of official corruption has developed which makes a mockery of rules and restrictions. For example, Soviet executives have taken a cue from their class brothers in the West in milking that well-known hidden income source, the expense account.

Legally, expense accounts in the Soviet Union are quite small. But the managers and bureaucrats have gotten around this. They bill each other's firms instead of their own! And, apparently, some firms in resort areas seem to exist for little more than to provide the source of what is essentially expense account funding of pleasure junkets for executives of other companies. For example, the Sochi Construction Organization #2 (Sochi is a resort on the Black Sea) once paid out 1300 rubles for the visit to town of A.V. Manvellian, director of the Southern Trade Construction Enterprise of Krasnodar, and a friend (not his wife), all of which was charged to cost overruns.⁷

This is not unusual. Note, for instance, the uses made of the "business conference." *Komsomolskaia Pravda* reports that a company from Krasnodar held a three-day seminar at Sochi, racked up a bill for 4,000 rubles (nearly \$5,000), and left no sign of actual business meetings. There were restaurant bills, a charge for a sight-seeing excursion, items for a typist and a stenographer (and what did this disguise?), but no seminar programs or records.⁸

And what are we to think of the conference on

milk and dairy production organized by the Sochi milk enterprise for 180 out of town delegates? Again according to *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, "No documents were found after the conference except for the resolution adopted by the conference which was printed two months before it took place!"⁹

These examples, of course, reveal only the extent to which managers and technical people are free to live high on the hog. The real power-holders, however, are, as we pointed out before, the high state officials who form a new state-monopoly capitalist class.

While it is occasionally in the interest of this ruling group to expose the "excesses" of their subordinates, partly to keep them in line and partly to pacify the justly outraged workers, such corruption is an integral part of the Soviet bourgeois way of life. As a Baku taxi driver summed it all up for a U.S. reporter: in the Soviet Union, to get almost anything "either you have to have a friend or it takes money."¹⁰

But what about the workers? How have they fared? Though some workers have been granted a few concessions in the form of higher wages, most have paid a stiff price in terms of security, working conditions and quality of life. In the previous chapter we described some of the ways in which capitalist restoration has affected workers on the shop floor, bringing on speed-up, layoffs and other ills stemming from bourgeois control of production. But outside the plant the status of workers has been sharply degraded, too.

First of all, we should note that in a society where the working class is really in power, to be a worker is considered a noble and respected activity, as it is in China, Albania and other socialist countries. Not so in the Soviet Union.

There was a survey taken of occupational preferences among Soviet high school graduates in June 1971. This was the first graduating class, by the way, to be raised completely under revisionist rule. In general, students looked upon the traditional petty bourgeois careers of scientist, surgeon, engineer, writer as having the most status. The most preferred working class jobs were the skilled positions of turner and polisher. In Novosibirsk these ranked 39 and 40. In Kostroma, a factory town, they ranked 75 and 76!¹¹ This only confirms the complaint of Georgi Kulagin, Director of the Sverdlov Machine Works Combine, who wrote in the journal *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, that since 1967 young people were refusing to become workers, finding it "beneath their dignity."¹²

The regular reader of the Soviet press will not generally conclude that there is any unemployment in the Soviet Union. The papers are filled with complaints of a labor shortage, mainly of skilled workers. Such complaints can also be found in the newspapers (want ads especially) in the U.S. and other openly capitalist societies. The establishment of "Bureaus for the Utilization of Manpower Resources" in 1967 was largely a response to this problem. The bureaus were designed to assure an equitable distribution of skilled labor among

various factories and plants, preventing a successful enterprise from hogging more than its fair share of skilled hands. They serve only marginally as true unemployment offices.

It is, however, at least partly the decline in prestige of working class careers and the growing income gap separating skilled labor from the bourgeois professions which has tended to discourage young people from improving their technical skills. After all, why become a lather or a carpenter when one might aim higher and become an engineer? The catch, of course, is that there are already too many engineers and the recruitment of new ones is basically limited to the privileged groups: the new bourgeoisie has already closed its ranks.

Meanwhile, the number of unskilled workers continues to grow. As the Soviet rulers seek to maximize surplus value in the form of profit by sacking unskilled workers through Shchekino-type ventures, a contradiction is developing between a growing pool of unskilled workers and a decreasing demand for their labor. Moreover, the problem is further sharpened by a continual and increasing flow of completely untrained young people streaming into the cities from the countryside as a direct result of revisionism's miserable failure in agriculture—the result of capitalist restoration. For example, in the region around Moscow the rural population decreased by 25% between 1959 and 1970.¹³

The proletarian response to this would be political mobilization for technical training aimed at breaking down distinctions between expertise and execution. This is impossible, of course, if the working class does not hold state power. An alternative for the Soviet bourgeoisie would be to increase the material incentive to become a skilled worker. But this conflicts with the need of capitalism to maximize profits at the expense of the workers. Under imperialism superprofits from ventures abroad can be used to bribe a small stratum of the skilled workers. This carries the added benefit for the capitalists of forging a social base for imperialism within the working class. But this policy also is limited by the need to maintain exclusionary barriers between the skilled labor aristocrats and the masses of workers.

Thus, a situation has developed in the Soviet Union which is similar to what we have in the U.S., although it is still not so advanced as here. In the U.S. almost everyone is aware that official unemployment figures hide a whole mass of millions of people who have long since given up the search for work. By and large these people constitute a reserve army of labor which permits the capitalists to more effectively hold down all workers, both employed and unemployed. In the U.S. and in the Soviet Union there are always a few skilled positions open while many ordinary unskilled workers go hungry.

Although the social-imperialists have not yet admitted to the existence of this problem (which, we grant, is as yet not nearly so severe as in the countries where capitalism has existed longer "uninterrupted" by any period of socialism), there

have been some indications in the Soviet press of its development. The most striking evidence is, of course, the marked increase in social ills like thievery, begging and drunkenness associated with the emergence of an unemployed reserve army. We shall discuss these shortly. But one indication that we find most outrageous is the appearance of reports like the one in the June 16, 1971 *Komsomolskaia Pravda*.

In that issue a young worker named A. Poriadkov told how in search of work he had travelled several hundred miles to Kama, where the Soviets (with extensive aid from the Ford Motor Co.) are building the world's largest truck factory. When he got there the Young Communist League told him there was no work. He apparently had lots of company because he soon learned that "about 200 people come and go like this every day"!

The editor of the paper did not question this, but instead added a horror story of his own. He told how eight young Ukrainian women spent their life savings travelling to Yakutsk in northern Siberia looking for work. They didn't find any and barely scrounged enough through odd jobs to return home. But the biggest horror was the editor's comment on both these incidents. "Who is responsible for this confusion?" he asked. "I think the principal culprit is the thoughtlessness of those who come unbidden."

The restoration of capitalism has also meant a loss in vital social services for the workers, as these are increasingly monopolized by the bourgeoisie. In Lithuania it is reported that saunas serving as exclusive clubs for the high Party and state officials have been constructed at public expense.¹⁴ Health care facilities are being built mainly for the privileged, while local clinics receive inadequate funding. In the Ukrainian town of Terebovlia, 4,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 28 are served by the following recreational facilities: one movie theatre, a "House of Culture" and a library that closes at 7:30 p.m. But, as 50 youths declared in a letter to *Pravda*, the House of Culture used to be open every evening with parties, amateur theatrical productions, lectures, music and games. Today it is used only rarely for major "cultural" events, like the visit of a leading ballet troupe or symphony.¹⁵

3) Once Again a "Prison House of Nations"

Lenin called tsarist Russia "the prison house of nations." A crucial part of the revolutionary struggle there was the liberation of nations formerly oppressed by Great Russia and the fight for full equality between all nationalities. With the overthrow of the tsar, the capitalists and landlords, the Soviet Union was founded as a multinational state based on the voluntary union of peoples, guaranteeing the right of self-determination to all formerly oppressed nations. Under socialism, great strides were made toward eliminating all national inequality—though some

mistakes in national policy were made. This stood as a powerful example that only with the rule of the working class could national oppression be uprooted, and the Soviet Union was a great assistance and inspiration to the hundreds of millions of nationally oppressed people in the colonies, and the working class and oppressed people everywhere, in the fight for national liberation and socialism.

But under the rule of the new tsars and the restoration of capitalism, this great progress has been reversed. Increasing attacks on the rights of minority nationalities in the Soviet Union have called forth powerful protests and resistance from among these peoples and from the Soviet people in general.

Initially, the policy of the revisionists headed by Khrushchev on the national question included the encouragement of bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations as part of the process of unleashing all possible bourgeois forces in Soviet society. Throughout the 1953-57 period, Khrushchev played upon and encouraged national divisions in order to more readily divide the Soviet people and communists. (Even during this period, however, Khrushchev did not hesitate to resort to policies of Russification when such suited his needs, as in Kazakhstan.)

But by 1958 Khrushchev abandoned his former policy—probably because it could no longer yield much in the way of tactical advantage in his personal power struggle with other revisionists. Thus, references to the "coming together" (*sblizhenie*) and even "merging" (*slianie*) of nations became the order of the day. From 1958 to the present, the Soviet leadership has followed a consistent policy of "national rapprochement", a policy of forcible assimilation and Great Russian chauvinism in the form of Russification of the oppressed nations.

This policy was first expressed in its full and complete form in the official Program of CPSU adopted at the 22nd Party Congress in 1961. Advocating an "increasingly closer rapprochement of nationalities", the program stated that:

*"The boundaries between the union republics within the USSR are increasingly losing their former significance... Full-scale Communist construction signifies a new stage in the development of national relations in the USSR in which the nations will draw still closer together and their complete unity will be achieved."*¹⁶

This position remains the official social-imperialist view. According to Brezhnev:

*"... the Party regards as impermissible any attempt whatsoever to hold back the process of the drawing together of nations, to obstruct it on any pretext, or artificially to reinforce national isolation."*¹⁷

In 1973 the Party journal *Kommunist* declared that the Soviet Union is entering "the stage of achieving complete unification" of nationalities. The same article pointed out that there are now

"possibilities to conceive more specifically the process of rapprochement, even integration among all nationalities." According to the social-imperialists, "a single socialist nation is taking shape" in the Soviet Union.¹⁸

That such views are merely a cover for the forcible Russification of Soviet minority groups can be clearly seen when the revisionist position is contrasted to the position held by genuine Marxist-Leninists. As summarized in a recent issue of *Peking Review*:

"Viewed from the long-term historical development, the integration of nations and extinction of nations conform to the law of historical development. But Marxist-Leninists maintain that the elimination of classes will come first, followed by the elimination of the state and finally that of nations. Lenin pointed out that mankind can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations." Referring to Lenin's attitude towards the problem of nationalities the great Marxist-Leninist Stalin pointed out that 'Lenin never said that the national differences must disappear and that national languages must merge into one common language within the borders of a single state before the victory of socialism on a world scale. On the contrary, Lenin said something that was the very opposite of this, namely, that 'national and state differences among peoples and countries... will continue to exist for a very, very long time' even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale." (emphasis in the original)¹⁹

In fact, Stalin stressed that the victory of socialism "creates favorable conditions for the renaissance and flourishing of the nations that were formerly oppressed by tsarist imperialism."²⁰

In the Soviet Union today, only the worst sort of national chauvinist could think that the conditions for a "coming together" or "integration" of nations exist. These did not even exist yet under socialism, where the historic advantages which the Great Russian nation enjoyed were not fully eliminated. (Though great progress was made toward real and concrete national equality.) Now that the Soviet Union is no longer a socialist country—and by no means is it in the stage of "full-scale communist construction"—the advocacy of "national rapprochement" can only mean advocacy of national inequality and national privilege, of Russification and national oppression.

In fact, all the lying propaganda about the "construction of Communism" in the Soviet Union is aimed not only at covering up the actual capitalist nature of society but is also an attempt to promote narrow self-interest, in particular national chauvinism, among the people of the Soviet Union, especially the Great Russians. It says: we are going forward to the final goal of Communism (which is presented as basically a higher standard of living achieved through greater production), and anything we do to get there, even if

it means oppressing and plundering nations inside and outside our borders, is a necessary and justified part of this process. Of course, the restoration of capitalism-imperialism in the Soviet Union—under the cover of "constructing Communism"—has brought increased suffering, not a better life, (and certainly not the advent of communism!) for the Soviet people as a whole, and especially the oppressed nationalities.

Before turning to some concrete examples of national oppression in the Soviet Union today, it will be useful to spend some time surveying the work of several leading Soviet ideologues on this question. Social-imperialist spokesmen have gone to great lengths to distort and deny Marxism-Leninism in order to cover up the chauvinist essence of their national policy.

One important forum where national policy was fully discussed was in a symposium sponsored by the authoritative journal *Voprosy Istorii* (Question of History), in 1966-1967 under the title "Discussion of the Concept: The Nation." According to a U.S. bourgeois scholar who studied the various papers coming out of this symposium, it:

*"represents the most serious attempt undertaken since the adoption of the Party Program to lay respectable theoretical foundations for rapid 'internationalization': although the series has been presented as a disinterested search for truth through a comradely and scholarly exchange of ideas, several considerations suggest that it may well have been a politically-inspired move supported by those elements in the elite who fear non-Russian nationalism and favor a faster assimilation of the national minorities."*²¹

Two trends appeared in this symposium. The dominant trend came out for the rapid merging of nations and revision of the definition of a nation in order to facilitate such a merging. The minority tendency, while defending the Marxist-Leninist position to some degree, did so from the opportunist stance of fighting a rear-guard action in defense of bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. This is clear from the attacks made by this trend on the mainly correct nationalities policy followed by the Soviet Union under Stalin. The tendency of this group was to postpone multinational unity so far into the future as to make this a completely abstract and idealistic concept.

However, the dominant, "assimilationist" trend was really most important here, for the ideas put forward by representatives of this line are by and large those held to by the social-imperialist leadership. The main spokesmen for this position in *Voprosy Istorii* were the academicians Pavel Rogachev and Matvei Sverdlin (a Russian and a Jew), Pavel Semionov (a Russian), Suren Kaltakhchian (an Armenian) and Nikolai Ananchenko (a Ukrainian).

Ideologically, this group seeks to redefine the nation in almost purely economic terms. According to these revisionists, this makes the nation a form specific to the capitalist epoch in the most

narrow sense. Thus, with the coming of socialism no material basis should exist to prevent the "coming together" and "merging" of nations. (True Marxist-Leninists, of course, also see the nation as an essentially bourgeois category—that is, as a function of capitalism and the transition from capitalism to full communism—but recognize its roots in pre-capitalist forms and its continued life long after the overthrow of capitalism.)

The line of these Soviet revisionists is essentially the same as the position Lenin attacked (especially around the time of WW I) as "imperialist economism." Lenin pointed out that such opportunism took the stand that "Since socialism creates the economic basis for the abolition of national oppression in the political sphere, *therefore* our author refuses to formulate our *political tasks* in this sphere! That's ridiculous!" (emphasis in original)²² Like their opportunist forerunners, these present-day Soviet revisionists refuse to recognize that socialism means the *development* of formerly oppressed nationalities, which unites these nationalities more firmly in the course of building socialism.

As noted earlier, Lenin repeatedly emphasized that the eventual achievement of communism will mean the abolition of nations but this does not mean that the objective of the socialist transition period is to eliminate nations, any more than the fact that communism will also mean the abolition of classes and the state argues for the elimination of the rule of the proletariat, its state dictatorship, during socialism. On the contrary, in the socialist period the proletarian state must be strengthened, just as the rights and development of all nationalities must be upheld, so that distinctions between classes and nations can finally be overcome and these categories finally disappear. But unlike the opportunists of Lenin's time, their descendants in the Soviet Union today dredge up old opportunism to serve the interests of revisionism, in power, of the new social-imperialist bourgeoisie.

Such apologists for social-imperialism, Sverdlin and Rogachev, for example, take the revisionist position that "it is necessary . . . to focus upon the fact that processes of merging must occur sooner within the USSR than in the world as a whole."²³ And as early as 1961 Semionov declared that " . . . the mutual assimilation of nations in essence denationalizes national-territorial autonomous units and even union republics, bringing Soviet society even from this standpoint closer to the point at which the full state-legal merging of nations will become a matter of the foreseeable future."²⁴

To justify this chauvinist policy the authors repudiate the Marxist-Leninist definition of a nation, formulated by Stalin in 1913: "A nation is an historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."²⁵ And since, as we shall see, there are some similarities—though not complete identity—between the national

question in the USSR and in the U.S. today, it will be helpful to briefly explore this question of the definition and development of nations as applied to the two superpowers.

To some forces in the U.S. revolutionary movement, it may seem strange for the RU to attack the Soviet revisionists for negating Stalin's criteria for a nation, since we have made considerable analysis, and engaged in lengthy polemics (for example, in *Red Papers* 5 and 6) to show that the Black nation in the U.S. today does not strictly conform to Stalin's definition. But our analysis, and the class stand on which it is based, is the direct opposite of that of the Soviet revisionist "theoreticians" on the national question.

Their purpose is to liquidate the national question, in the service of the imperialist policy of forcible assimilation of nations. Ours is to uphold revolutionary national struggle by making a concrete analysis of the actual character and material basis of the Black liberation struggle today and to refute the revisionists, Trotskyites and other reactionaries in the U.S. who argue that there is no longer—or has never been—a basis for a revolutionary Black liberation struggle.

The essence of our position is that Black people were formed into a nation, as Stalin defines it, in the period after the Civil War and Reconstruction. And, although that nation has been dispersed from its historic homeland, and transformed from mainly peasants to mainly workers, the struggle of Black people against imperialism has not therefore been liquidated, but made even more powerful, and more closely linked with the overall class struggle for socialism. Further, although the Black nation exists today under new and different conditions than in the past—and than nations in most other parts of the world, especially the Third World—and although the question of liberating and controlling the "Black Belt" south is not at the heart and the highest expression of the Black people's struggle, the right of self-determination, the right to political secession, must still be upheld. The policy of forcible assimilation must be defeated to unite the multinational proletariat in the U.S. for the historic task of socialist revolution.

In making this analysis, we have been guided by the stand, viewpoint and method of Marxism-Leninism, including the writings of Stalin, who pointed out that "nations and national languages possess an extraordinary stability and tremendous resistance to the policy of assimilation" even under the conditions where they have been "rent and mangled" by reactionary rule.²⁶ Stalin, on the other hand, emphasized that in an overall sense the national question is subordinate to the question of proletarian revolution, and that "the national question does not always have one and the same character, that the character and tasks of the national movement vary with the different periods in the development of the revolution."²⁷

The opportunists—those who cloak their bourgeois lines in the guise of Marxism-

Leninism—depart from this proletarian stand, viewpoint and method. In some cases this takes the form of dogmatism, viewing the national question as “something self-contained and constant, whose direction and character remain basically unchanged throughout the course of history.”²⁸ (Stalin) In other cases, it takes the form of revisionism—openly denying the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and cutting the revolutionary heart out of it. In either case, in the national question it leads to a line of liquidation and to unity with imperialist oppression of nations.

The revisionists themselves have used dogmatism as well as open revisionism to attack the Marxist-Leninist solution to the national question. Henry Winston, chairman of the “Communist Party”, U.S.A., has, for example, accused the Chinese Communist Party of great nation (Han) chauvinism, of violating the Leninist principle of self-determination, because the solution to the national question in China itself was not the same as in the USSR. In China it did not take the form of establishing separate republics, but only autonomous regions and areas for the minority nationalities. At the same time, the “CP”, U.S.A., argues that Black people are no longer a nation, and that there is no basis for a revolutionary Black liberation struggle, while their social-imperialist patrons in the Soviet Union argue that Stalin’s definition of a nation, and the whole Marxist-Leninist approach to the national question, is and always has been incorrect.

The purpose of these Soviet revisionists is to undermine the unity of the non-Russian nations in the Soviet Union, as well as other nations outside its borders, which are oppressed by and resist the new tsars. To do this they especially minimize the psychological and cultural (or ethnic) factors of a nation. Sverdlin and Rogachev, for example, reject the concepts of “national character” and common psychological makeup, one of the criteria outlined by Stalin. These revisionists recognize only “consciousness of national belonging”, by which they mean little more than simple recognition of one’s “ethnicity”, as in filling out a census form. They deny one of the key forms in which the common bonds of a nation are forged.

Along similar lines, Kaltakhchian offers the following definition: “A nation is a social-historical phenomenon, it evolved into a stable community of people in the capitalist stage of social development. The main characteristic features of a nation are community of territory, language and economic ties of people.”²⁹ In this joker’s view, Stalin failed to see that “... to assert the stability of community or psychological makeup of the people of a given nation, and consequently of exploiter and exploited in an antagonistic society, means to view the nation as a naturalistic and eternal, not social-historical community.”³⁰

This, of course, is rubbish. Marxists have always recognized that within any nation there is class struggle and Lenin even spoke of “two na-

tions” co-existing within all modern nations. Stalin, too, recognized this fact even as he asserted the existence of distinctly national psychology and culture. In *Marxism and the National Question*, he declares that “one cannot seriously speak of the ‘cultural community’ of a nation when the masters and the workers of a nation have ceased to understand each other.”³¹ But this has absolutely nothing in common with our revisionists’ essentially economic and mechanical materialist (and thus idealist) approach.

The position of Marxist-Leninists is that in the final analysis, psychology and culture are determined by class struggles. Real differences must always exist between the psychology and culture of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat in any given nation. But Marxist-Leninists assert that development never takes the same form everywhere. In the real world—which after all is what it is all about—capitalist production relations and the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat develop within particular national contexts and these different national contexts have an effect on *both* classes, on their psychology and culture.

For example, in China a great struggle is today being waged by the Chinese proletariat against the reactionary ideas of Confucius. The idealist world outlook of the bourgeoisie and the materialist world outlook of the proletariat stand in sharp contrast to each other on this question. The counter-revolutionary line of the bourgeoisie is to defend Confucius, while the revolutionary proletariat seeks to destroy all vestiges of Confucian thought.

In form, this is a struggle particular to China; yet its content is universal. All over the globe the bourgeoisie and the proletariat square off each day on opposite sides of innumerable questions of this type. In each country there is a proletarian revolutionary stand and a bourgeois reactionary stand on every question of national culture. But it is because the Chinese people of all classes *do* share a “common psychology manifested in a common culture” that the particular question of Confucius—and not Plato, Jesus, Allah, etc.—takes center stage. This commonality provides, so to speak, a common frame of reference, an arena within which the bourgeoisie and the proletariat must inevitably stand opposed.

This is what Marx and Engels meant when they stated in the *Communist Manifesto* that “Though not in substance, yet in form the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.”³² The class struggle under capitalism thus exhibits a national as well as an international character and, yes, “a common psychological makeup manifested in a common culture” does develop within each nation. Of course, as capitalism expands it does have a strong tendency to break down national barriers and eliminate these psychological and cultural differences. But even this process is uneven and

conditioned in turn by national peculiarities and distinctions, including those of national psychology and culture.

To hold otherwise is, in fact, to hold to a Trotskyite position, a position that the class struggle is only international and everywhere at the same stage of development. Such a position is based upon the idealist separation of politics from economics. Yet, in essence, this is really the position of our Soviet authors which, parenthetically, reveals once more that the essence of Trotskyism, despite its generally "left" cover, is accommodation to revisionism, on the national question as on other questions.

The social-imperialist "theoreticians" attempt to deny any basis for the continued existence of the nation once capitalism is gone. By denying the psychological and cultural particularities of different nations the revisionists seek to liquidate the national question, encourage premature assimilation and return to the oppression which minority nationalities suffered under the tsars.

In fact, in this regard two authors, Sverdlin and Rogachev, even go so far as to claim that under the tsars ties of friendship between the different nations were "very strong"! They assert that with the overthrow of capitalism, socialist economic development has spontaneously joined all Soviet citizens into one "Soviet people", a new ethnic group comprising all Soviet nationalities—a transitional form between national disunity and "national-less" (*beznatsionalnoe*) society.

This concept is a common one among Soviet propagandists and apologists and it has been embraced officially by the social-imperialist leadership. In his address to the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971, Brezhnev declared that "In the years of socialist construction a new historical community of people—the Soviet people—arose in our country."³³ To cover his tracks Brezhnev stressed that this "does not mean elimination of the differences among various nationalities and disregard of national characteristics, language and culture." But despite such hemming and hawing it is clear that the new concept is precisely designed as a means of liquidating the competing concept of the nation. For example, the journal *Soviet Ethnology* says: "The concept of nation and tribes ... will increasingly give way to the concept of the Soviet people."³⁴

Kaltakhchian's definition (quoted above) leads him to even more absurd and chauvinist conclusions. He even accuses Sverdlin and Rogachev of underestimating the "real community of national culture and national character in the Soviet Union."³⁵ (Never mind, of course, that Kaltakhchian has already criticized Stalin for employing just such supposedly incorrect terms as "national culture.") He argues that "with the disappearance of social antagonisms, national antagonisms also disappeared in the U.S.S.R." Social antagonisms—class antagonisms—have, of course, not disappeared in the Soviet Union, but once more exist within the framework of bourgeois rule and capitalist society. And, along

with this, contradictions between nationalities—which exist all during socialism—have once more become antagonistic, under the conditions of imperialist rule.

We have spent so much time on these petty hack ideologues not only to illustrate the depths to which the social-imperialists have sunk in their "theoretical" endeavors. It is important to recognize that the revival of national oppression has not come about simply because the current rulers are mainly Russian or because they are evil men (though they are both). Rather, this stems directly from the political line adopted by the revisionists in 1956. A crucial part of this was Khrushchev's attack on Stalin—which provides the basis for the attack on Stalin's great contributions on the national question and for the abandonment of the proletarian dictatorship by the CPSU.

The concrete results of this chauvinist line have been very evident. Seeking to hasten the "merging" of nations, the social-imperialists have dispersed members of the national minorities and oppressed nations throughout the Soviet state. According to the 1970 Soviet census, over 390,000 Moldavians, 14.6% of the Moldavian people, were moved out of the Moldavian Republic in the preceding decade. Over five million Ukrainians, 13.4% of the Ukrainian population, were moved out of the Ukrainian Republic.³⁶

Indeed, this kind of policy has led to stagnation in population growth and even the outright elimination of some of the smaller nationalities.

Theoretical Problems of the Formation and Development of the Multi-National Soviet State, a book published in the Soviet Union in 1973, states that "With each new census, the number of nationalities covered by statistics constantly declines." Thus, between the 1959 and 1970 censuses, the number of nationalities dropped from 126 to 119. Moreover, in these years the Karelian population decreased by 21,000 (about 13%), the Veps by 8,800 (about 51%), and the Mordvinians by 22,000. Those nations whose population remained completely stagnant included the Latvians, Evenkis, Khentys, Aleuts and Udegeitsys.³⁷

Along with forced emigration of minority nationalities, the social-imperialists have carried out Russification through the large-scale immigration of Russians and other Slav peoples into minority areas. This has led to increasing discrimination in employment. To cite just two examples: In 1972 a letter signed by 17 Latvian communists, most Party veterans of 25-35 years, was sent to the Central Committee of the CPSU protesting the removal of nearly all native Latvian officials from their posts in that small nation. The letter also condemned the continued immigration of droves of ethnic Russians who were placed in jobs ahead of Latvians. These latter often remained unemployed or under-employed.

Also in 1972 the Ukrainian Party member Ivan Dziuba published a scathing indictment of "Russification" in that nation, entitled *Internationalism or Russification?* In this work, Dziuba

presents the following example of the social-imperialists' national policy at work:

*"Let us take as an example one of the great Ukrainian construction projects, the building of the Kiev Hydro-electric power station . . . At the end of 1963, when the number of workers on the project almost reached its maximum, the labor force was made up of 70-75% Ukrainians, 2% Byelorussians, 20% Russians and smaller numbers of several other nationalities . . . The power station seems to have been built mainly by Ukrainians. And yet almost all the top posts on the job (construction chief, chief engineer, most sectional and divisional managers) were occupied by Russians. They also constitute the majority among the rank and file engineers and technicians. Among the Russian workers a much higher percentage are highly skilled than among the Ukrainians. Many of the latter were dismissed when the construction was nearing completion. Of the 127 Russian members of the management division of the main installations, only 11 were born in the Ukraine, the rest came from Russia."*³⁸

The immigration of ethnic Russians into minority areas has increased as the Soviet leadership relies more and more on the use of "experts" to stimulate the economy. As these are mainly Russian, this strategy for development is predicated on the perpetuation of national privileges. Were the policy of the Soviet Union the correct socialist policy of striving to eliminate the distinction between "expert" and "worker" the problem would not loom so large—although it would still be essential to train technicians from the ranks of the minority peoples.

But this is hardly the case. Thus, in some minority areas the local leaders—prevented from relying on their own resources by the Party's thorough-going capitalist line—have opted to forego any economic development rather than face an influx of alien technicians and skilled workers. In the Adzharskaia Autonomous Republic of Georgia, it was reported in the press that "there were executives who urged the Adzhan Party organization to reject proposals . . . to build new factories and plants and to develop resorts and tourism, basing their advice on the premise that this would lead to migration of people from other republics."³⁹

Of course, this is only a problem in those regions singled out by the social-imperialists for further economic development. The Soviet leadership's preoccupation with capitalist economic "efficiency" and "intensive" rather than "extensive" development has led to concentration of investment in the already developed "European core area" of the economy. This, despite the fact that population growth is currently most rapid in the relatively underdeveloped areas of Central Asia and Azerbaidzhan, and that these regions now suffer from a growing labor surplus exacerbated by further immigration from ethnic Russia and the Ukraine. (One estimate envisions the population of these regions doubling

within 30 years. Moreover, according to the 1970 census, between 52 and 56% of the population of the four Central Asian republics and Azerbaidzhan were under 20 years of age compared to only 29 to 38% in the major western regions.)⁴⁰

Under socialism the factors of investment efficiency, strategic and foreign policy considerations and regional equalization were all taken into account by the plan, and within the overall economic advance of the Soviet Union disproportionately high growth indexes were registered for those national republics initially most backward. This was achieved mainly through mobilizing and training of the native population. However, as one scholar has pointed out, "the tendency toward equalization of regional levels of development observable before World War II and on through the mid 1950s appears to have reversed since 1958."⁴¹

Another area in which the social-imperialists' chauvinist policy contrasts sharply with the policy of the communists under Stalin is in the field of education. Under socialism Soviet children were taught the traditions and true history of the oppressed peoples, but today they are spoon-fed a Russified series of lies and distortions passed off as proletarian history and designed to deny to the minority peoples their cultural heritage. This was suggested by the Soviet publication *Statistical Review*, which in 1972 declared that "the people of different nationalities and tribes in their millions regard Russian culture as their own."⁴²

One particular example has been the treatment of the history of the Kazakh people. We have only to compare the 1943 edition of the official *History of the Kazakh SSR* with the same work's 1957 version to see how much things have changed. The 1943 edition treats the annexation of Kazakhstan by the Russian tsar as follows:

*"The conversion of Kazakhstan into a colony signified the end of the independent existence of the Kazakh people and their inclusion in the system of military-feudal exploitation, which was created by the domination of Tsarism for all the exploited peoples of the tsarist 'prison of peoples.'"*⁴³

But the 1957 edition reads:

*"The annexation of Kazakhstan to Russia . . . had a progressive significance for the historic destiny of the Kazakh people appearing at a crisis hour in their history . . . (It) delivered the Kazakh people from enslavement by Dzhungarian feudal leaders . . . The most important result of the annexation was the drawing together of the Russian and Kazakh peoples in a common struggle against Tsarism with Russian landlords and capitalists and the Kazakh feudal leaders."*⁴⁴

Even more shocking is the contrast in treatment of the Kenesary movement, a revolutionary nationalist uprising of the Kazakhs against tsarist

rule which lasted from 1837 to 1847. According to the 1943 version:

*"During that decade the majority of the population of the three Kazakh hordes rose under their leader, Kenesary Kasymov, for a liberation struggle against Russian colonizers and their agents, the Sultan's rulers. In its scope and significance, this was the most substantial uprising of the Kazakh people in the whole period of the colonizing policy of Russian Tsarism. In this uprising, which appeared as the sum and synthesis of all the previous movements, the Kazakh people demonstrated with particular force and clarity, through their freedom-loving and militant spirit, that they would not easily give up their national independence."*⁴⁵

But now look at how this very same glorious revolt is slandered by the revisionists in their 1957 history. According to this new, up-dated and revised Great Russian chauvinist history, the Kenesary movement "was a reactionary, feudal-monarchical manifestation, aimed at holding the Kazakh people back and strengthening the patriarchal-feudal system, working toward the alienation of Kazakhstan from Russia and the Russian people."⁴⁶ Need we say more?!

Of course, with respect to education the rewriting of history is really a minor part of the social-imperialists' policy of national oppression. A more important point has been the declining status of minority language education, which is part and parcel of the social-imperialists' plan to institute Russian as the sole language for the Soviet Union. This goes directly against the stated policy of Lenin, who time after time declared that "There must be *no* compulsory official language." Today Brezhnev and his cronies have stipulated that "every citizen (of the non-Russian nationalities) should master this language (Russian)."⁴⁷ By robbing the oppressed nationalities of their own languages, the social-imperialists hope to hasten the disappearance of these peoples. As one Soviet text declares, "Groups of people who have changed their language, in the course of time usually also change their ethnic (national) identity."⁴⁸

Before the revolution virtually all education was in the Russian language. This held back the cultural, social and economic development of the non-Russian speaking nationalities. In the 1920s and 30s, Soviet power moved to correct the situation and "a vast network of native language schools" was set up. Further, Soviet scholars spent many years of painstaking effort constructing completely new written languages for those nationalities still limited to oral dialect. At the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 40s, the system was broadened even further.

However, according to Florida State University professor Brian D. Silver, "Despite the continued lack of systematic enrollment figures, highly reliable and convincing data have now accumulated indicating that enrollment in non-Russian schools has after all significantly declined during the

1960s, not only during Khrushchev's term as First Secretary but also during the leadership of Brezhnev-Kosygin."⁴⁹ This decline is a direct result of Khrushchev's education "reform" of 1959. This law gave parents the *formal* right to choose the language they preferred for their children's schooling, a move which most observers saw directed at exposing parents to coercion by local Russifying officials, a view borne out thoroughly by the results.

In 1958, even before the reform was officially promulgated, the Karelians were deprived of all native-language schooling. The Kabardians and Balkars met the same fate in 1965/66. The Kalmyks had native-language schooling decreased from four to three years in 1962/63 and by 1968 the whole program had been eliminated. In the Volga region nearly all non-Russian groups experienced a reduction to at least primary level native-language education by the end of the 60s. These are but a few examples.

The aim of these changes has clearly been to speed up the Russification of the oppressed nationalities. According to one Soviet educator, "The conversion of elementary school children to Russian as the language of instruction is an important phenomenon in the sphere of education... (which has) enormous progressive significance."⁵⁰

Now, the aim of communists has always been to develop cooperation and unity among the working people of all nationalities through increased communications and exchange on the basis of equality and mutual respect. That Russian would be the logical language for such inter-nationality exchange in the Soviet Union is not particularly shocking, though we should note that the Russians themselves now number just a little more than half the Soviet population. But to work for the rapid replacement of native languages as part of a general policy of hastening the "coming together" and future "merging" of nations certainly amounts to great nation chauvinism.

Yet in 1956, the very year of Khrushchev's triumph, "In autonomous republics, provinces, and national *okrugs*, the transaction of correspondence and business in local languages in state institutions and organizations was abandoned and transferred to the Russian language."⁵¹ We think this represents something more than mere coincidence.

We could, of course, continue to relate hundreds, even thousands of examples of national oppression stemming from the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. But this would, after a time, become redundant. Indeed, the most compelling evidence pointing to a revival of national oppression has been the growing movements of the oppressed peoples themselves, which have erupted at times into violent revolt. We shall deal with this aspect in our next chapter.

But one more story must be told in this sec-

tion. We present the following example, the story of how the Kazakh people were deprived of nearly half their homeland during Khrushchev's harebrained "virgin lands" campaign, because we believe it epitomizes the callous disregard for national rights shown by the current Soviet rulers. And, equally important, we relate this tale because one of its leading characters—its villain—is none other than Leonid Brezhnev himself.

The story begins at the September 1953 Central Committee plenum, six months after Stalin's death. This was when Khrushchev first proposed his sensational virgin lands scheme. This was a bold, overly ambitious and poorly planned proposal to plow and sow with grain 13,000,000 hectares—more than 50,000 square miles, an area larger than Louisiana and equal to England—of previously barren land in Kazakhstan and southwest Siberia. Although the extension of arable land was hardly a novel idea and completely sensible, the scope of Khrushchev's plans was bound to put too great a burden on Soviet resources. As one historian has noted, "The scheme was full of imponderables and fraught with incalculable risks."⁵²

No one recognized this more than Zhumabai Shayakhmetov, first secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party, who had held office for eight years and was the first native Kazakh to occupy such a high position. Shayakhmetov and other Kazakh leaders argued that the scheme was too drastic. Although they were eager to develop the resources of Kazakhstan for the benefit of all Soviet citizens, they recognized that the ambitious proposal laid out by Khrushchev would bring only misery to the native Kazakh population.

To undertake the plan hundreds of thousands of Russians would be needed to occupy and farm the land. The Kazakhs, herders by tradition, would be driven off the grasslands at such a rapid rate that few would be able to retrain as farmers. The Kazakh language and culture would be threatened, as would all vestiges of constitutionally assured Kazakh autonomy.

Khrushchev, however, refused to take no for an answer. While pulling political strings designed to undermine Shayakhmetov's authority in Kazakhstan, he shopped around for a compliant replacement. He found one in Brezhnev, then chief political commissar of the Soviet navy. There was, however, a hitch. At this time Khrushchev had not consolidated full power and other Party leaders, notably Malenkov, then Khrushchev's chief rival, demanded their own watchdog. So Brezhnev was not at first put formally in charge. His nominal superior—though everyone agreed that Brezhnev would really run the show—was Panteleimon Ponomarenko, a former associate of Zhdanov. This situation lasted until Malenkov's forced "resignation" as Premier, when Ponomarenko was abruptly shipped off to Warsaw as Soviet ambassador to Poland, leaving Brezhnev in complete command of Kazakh affairs.

On January 30, 1954, Shayakhmetov and members of the Kazakh polit-bureau were summoned to Moscow to meet with Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Ponomarenko and the Central Committee Secretariat. Shayakhmetov and an assistant, Ivan Afonov, were dismissed from office. A week later Brezhnev and Ponomarenko arrived at Alma Ata, capital of Kazakhstan, where a plenum of the Kazakh Party Central Committee "elected" them to replace the two deposed leaders.

Shortly thereafter, the seventh Congress of the Kazakh Communist Party was convened. Shayakhmetov was accused of embodying "bureaucratic, paper methods of leadership" and exiled to the position of *oblast* (district) secretary in South Kazakhstan (an area not part of the virgin lands scheme). In June 1955, Brezhnev personally arranged for his removal from that post, too.

With this resistance out of the way, Brezhnev proceeded to carry out Khrushchev's orders. By 1956 half a million Russian, Ukrainian and other settlers had arrived in Kazakhstan. Over 500 new state farms were established. By 1959 the Kazakhs numbered less than 30% of the population of their native homeland. The European population of Kazakhstan exceeded the entire European population of Africa.

The scale of the virgin lands adventure was awesome indeed. Initial plans called for bringing in 5,000 combines and harvesters, 10,000 trucks, 6,000 cultivators, 3,000 harrowers and over 50,000 tractors. Over 1,200 miles of railroad were to be laid. Yet with such grandiose plans it was, perhaps, inevitable that difficulties would arise.

Equipment arrived but the train stations had no machines to unload heavy tractors. Young *komsomoly* would come eager to work but there were no training programs. Trucks arrived but there was no fuel. During the first harvest countless tons of grain were lost because there were no sacks to put it in. As for housing, promised to the new settlers (but not to the native Kazakhs, of course), it simply never appeared. After the first harvest 75% of the immigrants faced a winter in temporary tents.

In short, "for hundreds of thousands of volunteers the reality of Kazakhstan was the rotting grain because someone had failed to provide trucks or storage facilities; the broken drive shafts on their harvesters for which there were no replacement parts; the cold nights in the tent or dugout; the lack of soap and water; the shortage of mittens and warm boots or the letters from home that never reached them because no one bothered to deliver the mail."⁵³

Yet despite this situation, the plan was deemed a success on the basis of a good harvest in 1954. This proved to be quite a feather in Brezhnev's cap and he quickly returned to Moscow with a promotion. Never mind the virtual pillage of the Kazakh homeland. Never mind that the massive shipment of equipment and manpower to the east completely disrupted and almost ruined

agriculture in the traditional Ukrainian and south Russian granaries. And never mind that after 1954, Kazakhstan has suffered far more than its share of bad harvests due to frequent drought, poor planning and a demoralized work force.

The robbery of the Kazakh people continues to this day. Currently, Russians, Ukrainians, etc., continue to move into the agricultural region opened up by the virgin lands campaign. However, few remain here. Soviet studies have shown that the typical immigrant stays in the countryside for just two or three years and then moves into already overpopulated urban and industrial areas of the Kazakh republic.⁵⁴ As a result, agriculture has stagnated in recent years while Kazakhstan's young cities are flooded with job seekers.

And, of course, it should come as no surprise that most good jobs go to those immigrants who, in theory, were "sent" to populate the countryside. Meanwhile, the native Kazakhs, already driven off their grazing land, stagnate in the cities where they increasingly comprise an exploited, underemployed—even unemployed—minority.

4. Working Women Bear a "Double Burden"

Social-imperialist rule has also brought back the oppression and degradation of women in capitalistic society. Under socialism the idea of equality between men and women was propagated widely and women were brought into production at all levels. Women made great gains, and even today the majority of Soviet doctors and a large proportion of other professionals are women. In industry women still number about half the work force.

But now, since the social-imperialists are incapable of developing the economy so that all might work productively, they are making a big noise about how "unfeminine" Soviet women have become. This is designed to put Soviet women back in the home shackled by all those backward customs and ideas that capitalism needs to survive. The revisionist "poet", Ilya Selvinsky, wrote recently of how women should learn to walk more gracefully: "Unfortunately, not all our girls pay attention to the way they walk," he complained, adding that "... we need a cult of feminine charms. It should develop not only in art but also in the family. It is necessary, I repeat, to 'idealize' women."⁵⁵

Soviet women, of course, have no need for the "pedestal" on which hacks like this would place them. And the average Soviet woman not only has no interest, but also no time to think about walking "more gracefully" for a dirty old man like Selvinsky. She is too busy slaving away, at home and on the job!

According to the Soviet woman sociologist, Zoya A. Yankova, women in the Soviet Union today spend more time on household chores than ever before.⁵⁶ This has been one factor leading to a rise in complaints about inadequate child care facilities. In fact, according to the July 17, 1971

Pravda, in the last ten years not one Soviet province built as many day care centers as planned! In light industry alone there is currently a waiting list for day care of over 150,000 mothers.⁵⁷

The chores of housework are particularly burdensome to women workers. According to a 1969 survey of Leningrad working women, 70% often felt fatigue on the job. Their illness rate was double that of male workers. When asked, "Is it difficult for you to combine family obligations with work on the production line?" 44% answered "bearable", 31% "hard" and 25% answered "very hard." Two Soviet researchers have concluded:

"that the possibilities for liberating women from the 'double burden' are being realized only in a small degree. As a result of women's entry into production, negative consequences have accompanied the positive ones: worsened physical and psychological condition, lowered general tone of conjugal and family life, restriction of social and cultural contacts."⁵⁸

One way to alleviate the burden on working women would be to increase production of inexpensive household appliances—combined with the sharing of household duties between men and women. But in spite of their perpetual promises of turning the Soviet Union into a consumer's paradise, the social-imperialists have done little in this direction. Under socialism, of course, no one had much access to such conveniences. The proletarian policy was that until such goods could be produced in enough quantity and at a low enough price to be accessible to the masses, none would be sold. Instead, socialism relied on the development of cooperation and socialized work. Where possible, for example, laundromats were opened. The fight against chauvinist ideas and the sharing of housework by men and women was encouraged.

However, with the present level of the Soviet economy, the capability of producing such labor-saving devices for the mass market now exists. Yet the social-imperialists price these items at or even above their cost of production, effectively limiting their market.

Moreover, the emphasis in production is, as in the U.S., on technical wizardry and not low-cost practicality. Thus, even in the highly industrial cities of Leningrad, Moscow and Penza only 13% of working women own washing machines, 20% own vacuum cleaners and only 38% own refrigerators.⁵⁹ One exasperated Soviet economist summed up the situation when he complained that "We've long since needed not 'technological wonders' but cheap, reliable appliances, not for exhibitions, but for the home, not for engineers and futurologists but for the housewives!"⁶⁰

All this adds up to an attempt by the social-imperialists to drive women from the work force, transforming them into patronized and oppressed housekeepers and "baby makers." Yet despite all

the hardships and pressure placed on them, Soviet women *must* work. As a railroad worker remarked:

*"There are five children in our family. There are plenty of cares. But my wife goes to work. She works because my earnings do not provide for all the needs of our family. No, today work is not yet a spiritual need of women. It is a material necessity."*⁶¹

But even on the job women still encounter discrimination. Even in fields where women form the majority of the work force, few women occupy leading positions of authority. For example, although only 15% of all medical personnel are men, they are 50% of all chief physicians and hospital executives. Likewise in industry, "Women are employed as supervisors, shop chiefs, and in comparable leadership positions one-sixth to one-seventh as frequently as men."⁶²

Women are also concentrated in the most low-paid industries and positions. According to the Soviet authority, A.G. Kharchev, the average wage of women in industry is well below that of men. And as the following table shows, women are by and large concentrated in lower-paying fields:

FEMALE PARTICIPATION AND WAGE SCALES IN SOVIET LABOR FORCE BRANCHES: 1967

Branch	Women as % of total employment	Rubles per month (avg. all workers)
Science & scientific svcs.	45	122.1
Construction	28	119.4
Transportation	24	115.5
Apparatus of gov't. & economic admin. & of coop. & public orgs.	58	112.7
Industry	47	112.0
Nationwide average	50	103.4
Education	72	96.4
Credit & Ins.	75	93.3
Health	85	82.2
Trade	74	82.2
Housing & Municipal Economy	51	78.7
Communications	66	78.1

Reprinted from Lotta Lennon, "Women in the USSR." Source: *Narodnoe Khoziasvo SSR v 1969 godu*, Moscow, 1970, p. 654.

Similar statistics also indicate that within these fields, women are once again concentrated at the bottom of the wage hierarchy.

This situation is, however, to some extent inherited from the socialist period. At that time, inequalities continued to exist and it was generally recognized that these could only be finally overcome on the basis of increased production and technological progress on the one hand, and the

conscious long-term class struggle against male chauvinist ideology among the masses on the other. And a good deal of progress was made!

However, in recent years—despite the fact that for the first time the technical level facilitating the full absorption of women into heavy industry (where the jobs pay best) has been reached—the situation is actually deteriorating. For example, the average monthly wage in education (72% women) was seven rubles below the national average in 1967. Yet by 1971 this differential had more than doubled to 14.2 rubles.⁶³ Today male bureaucrats who merely sit on their asses all day earn several times the salary of a woman textile worker or collective farmer.

Also of concern to Soviet women has been the severe decline in family stability over the past 20 years. Communists, of course, have always advocated and fought for the full right to divorce. And after every socialist revolution millions of women have taken advantage of this right, freed themselves from old, oppressive relationships and entered society as productive and fulfilled individuals. Millions of marriages have also been strengthened by both partners knowing that union is fully voluntary.

But communists do not advocate the right of divorce out of any commitment to "free love" or opposition to the family. We support the right to divorce in order to strengthen family bonds. For only on the basis of the full right to divorce for both partners can a marriage of equality and mutual respect be built.

Communists stand for a strengthening of the family not as an isolating refuge from society, but as a fully participatory societal unit. In China today, for example, divorce is relatively rare even though the right of divorce is guaranteed both women and men. And where conflicts do arise, all efforts are made to resolve the difficulties. Divorce is considered the last step and, in most cases, represents a kind of failure.

This was also true in the Soviet Union under socialism. But since 1950 the situation has changed drastically.⁶⁴ Today the Soviet Union has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, and this is still rising rapidly. In 1960 there were 270,200 divorces in the Soviet Union. By 1967 the annual figure had risen to 646,300. Put another way, in 1950 for every 100 marriages there were but 3 divorces. In 1960, however, there were 10 divorces for every 100 marriages. By 1967, for every 100 marriages there were 30 divorces, a tenfold increase in just 17 years! Soviet statisticians themselves are quite firm in stressing that improved reporting procedures and somewhat liberalized laws account for only a small portion of this increase.

5) Alcoholism and Crime: The Social-Imperialist Plague

Probably the most prevalent reason given for the increasing instability of the Soviet family has

been what is now by far one of the most serious and widely discussed social problems in the USSR: alcoholism. In our investigation of Soviet society, we have been struck by the incredible depth of this problem under revisionist rule. The spread of alcoholism has become symbolic of all the decay and rot growing everywhere in the Soviet Union today. In fact, we think that a somewhat more detailed look at the development of alcoholism and associated problems will give people a very clear picture of what the rise of social-imperialism has meant in stark human terms for the working people of the Soviet Union.

Heavy drinking is, of course, hardly a new phenomenon in Russia. In pre-revolutionary times the state drew a substantial portion of its revenue—as much as one-third—from its alcohol monopoly and as a result was eager to encourage drinking as both money maker and social pacifier. (The tsarist budget used to be called the "Drunk Budget" due to its dependence on alcohol tax revenue.) In the words of a Soviet journalist:

*"For centuries heavy drinking seemed an indispensable and necessary part of Russian life. The endless grey monotony of peasant life with its constant threat of famine and spine-breaking toil, the dirt and degradation of squalid city slums, the stifling atmosphere of merchants' homes—all this was an appropriate frame for 'vodka', one of the few words from tsarist Russia that became familiar throughout the world."*⁶⁵

This was one of the first problems to be tackled by the Bolsheviks after 1917. And the evidence reveals quite clearly that per capita consumption of alcohol declined steadily between the revolution and 1950. In the pre-revolutionary years 1906-10, per capita consumption of pure alcohol stood at 3.41 liters a year. By 1935-37, this had declined to 2.8 liters. And 1948-50 marked the low point in official production, with a figure of 1.85 liters, a decisive reduction of 50% from pre-revolutionary times.⁶⁸

Many bourgeois observers are quick to point out that these figures cover only legal production and that there is a long tradition of home-brewing. This is true, but it only makes the argument stronger, not weaker. For throughout these years the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly urbanized. Peasants were moving to the cities to fill jobs in the new factories. And city workers were losing touch with relatives in the countryside. (The practice of city workers returning home for harvest, common under tsardom, began to fade out after 1917.) Since moonshining is mainly a rural activity, it stands to reason that consumption of legal alcohol would thus tend to rise both absolutely and on a per capita basis. But instead the opposite occurred.

The main weapon used to defeat alcoholism was revolutionary politics. Enthusiasm for socialism and disciplined dedication to the dif-

ficult but inspiring tasks of socialist construction came to replace the desire of people to escape to an alcoholic fantasy land. Patient education about the dangers of alcoholism was carried out. For example, in the 1920s the All-Union Council of Anti-Alcohol Societies was set up. This body published a journal, *Trezvost' i Kultura* (Temperance and Culture), distributed other scientific and popular literature, and organized anti-alcohol propaganda. State production of vodka was decreased sharply and price policy worked to discourage excess drinking. Moreover, alcoholics themselves were treated as suffering individuals in need of help and not as criminals. Sobering-up stations "provided a bath, a clean bed and hearty breakfast, all gratis."⁶⁷

Today, however, the situation is entirely different. According to reliable estimates, consumption of vodka, wine and beer in the USSR doubled between 1950 and 1960 and increased by another 50% by 1966.⁶⁸ By all accounts it is still increasing at present. Beginning in 1958, the Soviet authorities took note of the growing trend and began to take "corrective measures" but to no avail. The problem has become ever more severe and, according to *Izvestia*, "the harm caused by alcoholism is exceptionally great."⁶⁹

Today, the typical worker's family spends almost as much on alcoholic beverages (93 rubles/year) as it does on movies, theatre, newspapers and all other cultural goods and services.⁷⁰ It is said that over half of all traffic accidents are directly attributable to drink.

Industrial enterprises each year report hundreds of thousands of cases of absenteeism and tardiness due to drinking. In Zhodino, Minsk province, paychecks were issued directly into workers' savings accounts to cut spending on vodka.⁷¹ And on one South Russian railway line complaints of drunken young people on trains became so great that volunteer militia detachments of train crew members had to be formed to protect the passengers.⁷² This reminds us of rides on the subway systems of U.S. cities.

Even from the Soviet press it is clear that the spread of alcoholism is approaching epidemic proportions. Yet the most stringent laws, such as the one passed in 1967 providing two years "compulsory treatment and corrective labor" for excessive drinkers, have had little effect. Why are the Soviet people, especially the workers, turning to drink?

As early as the 1840s, Friedrich Engels in his famous study, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, noted that the worker drinks primarily to escape from the suffering of his daily existence under capitalism: "...he *must* have something to make work worth his trouble, to make the prospect of the next day endurable...(He seeks) the certainty of forgetting for an hour or two the wretchedness and burden of life..."⁷³ Other writers have also pointed to oppressive social conditions as a principal cause of alcoholism, including the great Soviet revolutionary writer, Maxim Gorky. (See excerpt in box.)

MAXIM GORKY ON THE CAUSES OF RUSSIAN ALCOHOLISM

"The day was swallowed up by the factory; the machine sucked out of men's muscles as much vigor as it needed. The day was blotted out from life, not a trace of it left. Man made another imperceptible step toward his grave; but he saw close before him the delights of rest, the joys of the odorous tavern and he was satisfied . . . The accumulated exhaustion of years had robbed them of their appetites, and to be able to eat they drank, long and deep, goading on their feeble stomachs with the biting, burning lash of vodka . . . Returning home they quarreled with their wives; and often beat them, unsparing of their fists. The young people sat in the taverns or enjoyed evening parties at one another's houses, played the accordion, sang vulgar songs devoid of beauty, danced, talked ribaldry, and drank. Exhausted with toil, men drank swiftly, and in every heart there awoke and grew an incomprehensible sickly irritation. It demanded an outlet. Clutching tenaciously at every pretext for unloading themselves of this disquieting sensation, they fell on one another for mere trifles, with the ferocity of beasts, breaking into bloody quarrels which sometimes ended in serious injury and on occasions even in murder.

—from Maxim Gorky, *The Mother*

No doubt, this is a large part of the explanation for the rise of drinking in the Soviet Union. The workers know in their hearts that they are no longer in control and can feel the effects of capitalist restoration in all aspects of their lives. But the development of an alcoholism problem is, in fact, more intimately connected with the restoration of capitalism than even this.

The first references to the drinking problem to appear in the Soviet press were in the early 1950s. But at this time the main target of criticism was not the workers, though we would never go so far as to portray the Soviet proletariat as at any time a teetotaling class. The problem in the early 50s, however, was concentrated among the educated youth, the sons and daughters of the rising new bourgeoisie. These young people had come to see themselves as something special just because their parents were high Party officials, technicians or university scholars. One way a number of them (though decidedly a minority) would flaunt their privileged position was to drink to excess in public.

In late 1953, *Komsomolskaia Pravda* carried a shocking account of a group of such young people who formed a drinking and social club that turned to petty crime to finance its activities. Tragically, in the course of trying to hide their operation from the police, several of the youths turned to murder. When the case was exposed it

turned out that most of the participants came from a background which we in the U.S. might label "spoiled rotten."⁷⁴

Stories like this indicated that the struggle against alcoholism under socialism was not unconnected to the continuing class struggle. This class struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, was not just a question of internal Party politics. It touched all aspects of life and was waged at all levels of society.

Yet despite this kind of continued struggle, it was the political restoration of capitalist class rule, signalled by Khrushchev's take-over in 1956, which marked the real take-off point for the resurgence of alcoholism. To confuse and pacify the workers, the Khrushchev revisionists opened the taps and really let the vodka flow. Criticism and exposure of dissolute, privileged youth came to a halt and vodka was pushed on the workers. This was especially true once profit was restored to the command post of the economy.

One U.S. observer, after surveying a wide array of references to alcoholism in the Soviet press, reached the following conclusions:

"Commercial organizations and outlets are vitally interested in the sale of alcoholic beverages, which are sold in special shops, grocery stores and in restaurants and cafes. The fulfilment of economic plans is contingent upon achieving the maximum sales of such beverages, for they account for a large part—approximately one-third—of sales plans in the public catering industry. Enterprise managers, sales clerks, waiters and waitresses are thus personally interested in the liquor trade. Moreover, to increase profits, commercial organizations try to place wine and/or vodka outlets near mass markets. This does not only mean that liquor is sold near plants and factories; in some parts of the country, over-zealous officials sell hard liquor in parks and on beaches, and they have installed wine-vending machines in public places . . . Stores arrange elaborate and attractive displays to advertise alcoholic beverages, corrupting adults and young children alike. At the same time, films, television and popular literature are said 'to praise the pleasures of alcohol to excess.' Apparently 'abundant and pointless drunkenness is frequently shown in theatres, on the screen and on television.' An eminent legal scholar has remarked, ' . . . we see the heroes of our films drinking with gusto. I can hardly think of a single picture in which there is no drinking.' Other Soviet commentators have seconded this view."⁷⁵

That the problem can be laid directly at the doorstep of newly triumphant capitalism was also made clear in a 1971 letter to *Izvestia*, which noted that in the past stores had to fulfill specific sales for particular items. In other words, they were told, try to sell so much meat, butter, eggs, etc. Now, however, each store must strive to meet an overall profit quota which leads

managers to push the easiest products to sell, one of which is vodka. The writer of this letter asked poignantly, "How often for the sake of a visible figure on the profits chart do financial agencies chase after 'graphic' crisp to the touch money... (But) how do you calculate the losses from broken homes, degradation of the personality...?"⁷⁶ Does this appeal not truly expose the ugly face of capitalism in the Soviet Union today?

In the Soviet Union alcoholism is a matter of great concern also because it is seen as tied in with a more general decline in moral vigor. For example, for the first time in Soviet history (outside of a small number of border regions such as poppy-growing Georgia) drug addiction is emerging as a problem. Evidence of this development is still scanty and it is clear that the problem is not yet nearly so severe as in the U.S., but it is surely growing.

In both 1969 and 1972, new laws were promulgated increasing the severity of punishment for drug trafficking. This year an additional, even tougher, law had to be enacted. And in 1970 the satirical weekly, *Krokodil*, carried the first public expose of the life of a big-time Tashkent dope dealer, a near-legendary figure named "Crooked Apollo."⁷⁷

More striking and widespread has been the rapid growth of juvenile delinquency. This is often directly associated with alcoholism—much more so than in the 50s—as drunken gangs of rowdy youths have begun to cause real problems; for example, in one Kazakhstan silk-weaving town. (For details of this grizzly story, see box.) With the decline in available recreation facilities and the increasing cost of those activities which do exist, many young people have taken to hanging out aimlessly on street corners, passing around a bottle or two of wine or, perhaps, vodka. As in the U.S., this is often the only kind of social life available to working class youth. But just as in the U.S., it can degenerate into vagrancy, hooliganism or petty larceny. The Soviet press in recent years has been filled with complaints about such activity. In Moscow the rise in burglaries has led the police department to begin selling an automatic burglar detection system which is advertised in the press.⁷⁸

Also serious has been the problem of the so-called "Bichi" (literally "nuisances"), gangs of tramps who roam outlying regions. These people are attracted to places like western Siberia due to labor shortages in these areas. They come from all walks of life and include "former bank directors, builders, disappointed artists, metal workers, graduates of circus schools, piano tuners" and others. Dropouts from society, they work at casual jobs on a part-time basis and are usually paid in kind with furs, meat and milk by local peasants. These goods the "Bichi" then sell on the black market for a profit.

When not at work, the "Bichi" engage in petty crime, drinking bouts and just general anti-social

ALCOHOL AND CRIME

In the mill town of Fergama, in Kazakhstan, about 600 young women come into the city from the surrounding countryside each year to work in the silk weaving mills. A similar number leave, disappointed and depressed. Why?

According to Komsomolskaia Pravda, the problem is alcohol. It seems that periodically the women's dormitory at the factory falls "under a state of siege." The besiegers are, of course, drunken young men. But these are no idle party raids. On occasion women would narrowly escape rape and all endured the most vile of insults and abuse. One particularly "vicious" gang which from time to time would make such visits to the dorm was under the known leadership of the Secretary of the factory's Communist Youth League chapter!

Why did this occur? Well, one explanation might be that the mill and the women's dorm are separated by about a three block walk. And along this stretch the state has seen fit to set up no less than nine vodka bars. The young women report that sometimes they must arm themselves with bricks and travel in large groups just in order to make it home safely!⁷⁹

behavior. Themselves victims of the social-imperialist system, their revolt has led them to reject all society and to snub their noses at the hard-working and oppressed majority of the Soviet people.⁸⁰

The Soviet Union does not publicly disclose figures on crime, but authorities have certainly recognized its growth. Under public pressure, various special commissions have been formed to "deal" with the problem. As in the U.S., a whole criminology bureaucracy is developing and periodically profound "studies" appear which serve only to confirm what ordinary workers had already known. These studies and commissions, despite the fact that many well-meaning people serve on them, are designed to divert attention from the real causes of crime and from the real criminals.

This can be seen pretty clearly from a 1971 interview with the Soviet Minister of Justice, Vladimir I. Terebilov, published in the trade union newspaper *Trud*. Terebilov was not optimistic about prospects for improvement in the crime situation. Nor was he particularly enlightening as to why. His explanation of the rising crime rate reads as follows: "As long as teen-agers commit crimes, we cannot expect crime to be reduced."⁸¹ Such brilliance! This fellow surely deserves a place beside our own "leaders" in the two-faced, shoddy double-talk Hall of Fame.

These are but a few of the social problems which have developed in the Soviet Union in recent years. We do not mean to suggest that managerial corruption, unemployment, national

oppression, drunkenness and crime are totally new. These were present under Stalin's leadership as well. But at that time these problems represented what was old and declining and not what was new and developing. And most important, the policy of the Party and state were aimed at systematically eradicating such backward things from Soviet society. If this was sometimes done in an inefficient, bureaucratic or insensitive manner, we must learn from that negative experience as well as its overwhelmingly positive character and truly remarkable achievements. And, in opposition to the present social-imperialist rulers, the true Soviet communists had the interests of the working people, the vast majority of the people of the Soviet Union and of the world, at heart.

The restoration of bourgeois rule and capitalism is what lies at the heart of each of the "horror stories" we have related in this chapter. We do not relate this information with glee, standing aside from the struggle like the Trotskyites and other so-called "revolutionaries" who slanderously pontificate about the evils of "Stalinism"—that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat—even as they abandon the Soviet working class in its time of trial and renewed struggle for socialism.

Certainly it would be possible to write lengthy articles, even books, on each of the problems we have touched upon here. We make no claim to a "total assessment", and we encourage others to deepen our still somewhat superficial investigation of such questions as national oppression and the role of women in the Soviet Union. But, at the same time, we would like to stress that for such investigation to be of use to the revolutionary movement, it must be based firmly on the Marxist-Leninist method and upon a firm grasp of the Soviet Union's development into an imperialist (monopoly capitalist) country.

Recently the so-called "convergence" theory has become popular among certain circles of U.S. bourgeois scholarship; and to some extent such ideas have found echoes in the anti-imperialist movement as well. This "theory" tries to argue that the Soviet Union and the United States are spontaneously becoming more alike as each enters the stage of advanced industrial society, also known as "neo-capitalism", "post-industrial society" or "consumer society." This idea is profoundly misleading.

While it is true that the two superpowers are becoming more similar in some key respects (and we have noted several of these), the problems they share are not problems of "advanced industrialism", a new stage in history which supposedly supercedes such "antiquated" 19th century phenomena as capitalism and socialism, a stage which will somehow be reached one day by both China and India, Albania and Yugoslavia, but by "different paths." No, these problems which the two imperialist giants share are problems of class rule—to be specific, of bourgeois class rule.

It is not inevitable that wealth and power be distributed inequitably. It is not inevitable that economic development leads to social disruption, disillusionment and moral decay. The problem of the "quality of life" is a problem as directly tied to the nature of the social system as the problem of wage labor. In China before Liberation there was a drug addiction problem worse than in any "advanced" country today. Yet within ten years after the victory of the revolution, this had, for all intents and purposes, disappeared, and is not re-appearing now that economic development has made great strides under the continuing rule of the proletariat.

The problems the Soviet people face in their everyday lives today are not exactly the same ones faced by their parents and grandparents in 1917, though many phenomena common to tsarist Russia have re-emerged. But, once again, they are problems produced and exacerbated by the capitalist system. And like the problems of pre-October, 1917, these will not be solved until capitalism is overthrown and once more torn from the Soviet soil by its roots.

6. Literature and Art in the Service of the Bourgeoisie

Our survey of life under social-imperialist rule would not be complete if we did not at least touch upon the development of culture under revisionism.

Mao Tsetung has stated:

"Any given culture (as an ideological form) is a reflection of the politics and economics of a given society and the former in turn has a tremendous influence and effect upon the latter . . ."

He also says: "In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines."⁸²

Under Stalin, Soviet policy on the arts was based upon the application of these principles. During those years serious attempts were made to develop and popularize proletarian forms in literature and art.

When we speak of proletarian art we mean two things. First of all, true proletarian art is art that teaches the working people about their own history, traditions of struggle and achievements. It is art which seeks to raise the workers to a fuller and more complete understanding of their place in the world and of the historical destiny of the working class to build a new socialist and communist world, and thus liberate all humankind. Proletarian art is partisan art. It boldly champions the cause and leadership of the working class. It stands for collectivity over individualism, for struggle and militancy over pacifism, for the toiling masses over all exploiters past and present.

But proletarian art must be art for the workers. The proletarian artist cannot preach to the masses but must go among the masses, learn from the masses and bring back to the masses in the higher

form of art their own authentic, heartfelt aspirations. To do this proletarian art must speak the language of the masses.

In the first decade of Soviet power, a number of artists and writers were inspired by the revolution and its liberating force. These men and women sought to express their support for and loyalty to the revolution in their art, but many had little experience with the real world of the workers and peasants. They were more familiar with the narrow, inbred world of the petty bourgeois artist. Thus, many gravitated toward formalist and expressionist forms of abstract art. This was particularly true in painting and music.

But such art meant little to the workers. Therefore, by 1930 the Party had moved to correct the situation. Norms were established to guide cultural workers and to help them better serve the masses of people. Many remolded themselves by joining in the heroic efforts to industrialize the country, defeat the Nazis and build socialism.

These proletarian artists worked side by side with the working people and their works reflected the kind of class feeling this engendered. Others, however, retained their old bourgeois world outlook. They continued to believe that they, the artistic and literary "geniuses", were the real heroes and that it was their job to interpret life to the masses who were dull and stupid.

Throughout the socialist period the struggle between two lines on literature and art continued, as did the class struggle as a whole. During this period the proletarian line was generally in command, and was expressed through the theory of "socialist realism."

"Socialist realism" is a concept much maligned by the bourgeoisie. In essence, however, this theory meant only that art should reflect reality as seen by the class conscious proletariat. In other words, revolutionary art and literature should portray in a down-to-earth style the reality of socialist life from the point of view of revealing the new world coming into being. This concept is intimately connected with Andrei Zhdanov, who was its major proponent in the late 1940s.

The bourgeoisie loves to portray Zhdanov as an enemy of art; indeed, an enemy of life itself. This is patently absurd. We need only point out that when Leningrad was under siege by the Nazis and the whole city was starving and freezing, struggling daily with death, it was Zhdanov (then the city's Party secretary) who arranged to hold a writers' congress right in the city's center!

But Zhdanov was an enemy of bourgeois art. Through constant criticism he sought to develop among Soviet cultural workers an attitude that in art and literature, as elsewhere in life, politics must be in command. The campaign associated with Zhdanov was an important blow struck by the Soviet communists in their struggle with revisionism. (see Chapter II).

The Soviet working class produced many fine writers and artists. The most famous is certainly Maxim Gorky, whose career began before the re-

volution and whose works, such as *The Mother* and *The Lower Depths*, served as models to a whole generation of proletarian writers. Other notable writers include A. Fadeyev, whose *The Young Guard* tells the story of a group of Soviet youth who fight heroically behind Nazi lines in World War II. Also a great contribution was Nicholas Ostrovski's *How the Steel is Tempered*. And in film can anyone deny the great proletarian artist, Sergei Eisenstein?

With the coming to power of the Khrushchev gang in 1956, however, these figures were pushed to the background. Their writings were branded "outmoded." Instead, figures like Boris Pasternak, Ilya Ehrenburg and Yevgeny Yevtushenko came to the foreground.

Pasternak and Ehrenburg represented an older generation of Soviet writers. They were the men who had refused to remold themselves. For years they had harbored resentments against the workers' state for "shackling their creativity." Now they were set free to publish openly all the garbage they had been carrying around in their heads for so long. In his six volume memoirs, *People, Years, Life*, Ehrenburg wrote warmly of the United States and praised all the great "progress" the U.S. ruling class was making. He openly attacked Stalin (in this he was given special encouragement by Khrushchev) and renewed his now weary call for the introduction of the abstract into the Soviet Union.⁸³

More important was the publication of Pasternak's counter-revolutionary novel *Doctor Zhivago*. This book treats the Russian revolution through the eyes of a complete historical non-entity, a man who stands aside as history takes a leap forward. Is this done to point to the folly of such a position? Of course not. The main theme of this novel is the assertion that the October Revolution was an "historical error" and an "irremediable catastrophe." It alleges that "everything that happened" after the October Revolution "was a crime." The October Revolution was a catastrophe—but for the bourgeoisie!

In addition, this period saw such figures as Mandelstam, Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and Bunin—all previously criticized—crawl out of the woodwork and into the limelight. This period saw such books as Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* become "bestsellers."

At the same time, Yevtushenko came to represent a new generation of writers. Marching under the Khrushchevite banner of the so-called "culture of the whole people, of all mankind", young writers like Yevtushenko claimed only that they were "children of the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."⁸⁴

In their works these writers would slander the accomplishments of the Soviet working class. They held up the capitalist world as a model to be emulated, openly identifying with the Western bourgeois style of life. For example, in one novel the author Gladilin described his "hero" as a man

"seeking ways to make money to buy a car as soon as possible so that he could drive for pleasure every Sunday." Is this the proletarian ideal? ⁸⁵

This new school of art was extremely influential in film. Under Khrushchev, Soviet filmmakers abandoned the militant tradition of Eisenstein. Increasingly, Soviet films began to examine life not from the class conscious stand of the revolutionary proletariat but from the "humanistic", pacifistic stance of the bourgeoisie. Commenting on the Soviet love film, *Nine Days of a Single Year*, *Time* magazine noted that in the past the heroes of Soviet films were "Stakhanovites and strong-jawed sons of the soil", while in this film the heroes are more like the "bourgeoisie" of the West. This shows, in *Time's* view, "how far creeping liberalism has managed to advance." Another film of this period, *I Stride Through Moscow*, is a flagrant copy of the typical Hollywood diversion. ⁸⁶

During the Khrushchev period, Soviet films went out of their way to encourage bourgeois pacifism as part of the general campaign to present "peaceful co-existence" as the essence of communist strategy. For example, the film *Ballad of a Soldier*, which was widely acclaimed in the U.S., takes as its theme "how war goes against nature and peace brings happiness." While it is true that the final aim and destiny of the working class is to abolish all war, by eliminating imperialism and all reactionary classes, it is not true that under all conditions peace necessarily brings happiness. Peace with imperialists can only bring greater suffering and more war. Yet this film puts forward precisely this notion of classless peace at any price.

In response to criticisms of this kind, Soviet apologists often point out how the Soviet Union suffered during World War II. They argue that after 20 million deaths the Soviet peoples learned better than anyone the real significance of peace. This is certainly true. But the real significance of peace is not what the revisionists say it is. Peace is not something for which people go begging. It is not something for which the masses will not sacrifice. Peace must be won on the basis of freedom, independence and ultimately socialist revolution. It is not some classless, foggy utopia.

Contrast the revisionist treatment of Soviet wartime sacrifices with the attitude of the Vietnamese communists, for example. Certainly the Vietnamese have suffered from war as much as any nation. Yet do the Vietnamese speak of how war goes against nature? Have they yearned only for the guns to silence? No! Because, as Ho Chi Minh declared, "Nothing is more precious than freedom and independence."

With the ousting of Khrushchev and the advent to power of Brezhnev, Kosygin and Co., the revisionists began to change their tune a bit. It appears that during the Khrushchev years, "liberalism" in art, literature and film went a little too far. The petty bourgeois individualism of

such writers as Solzhenitsyn was as uncomfortable with imperialism as it had been with socialism. And with all the writers jumping on the bandwagon to "expose" Stalin and his "crimes", people began to wonder whether they could ever believe their leaders. After all, if a jerk like Ehrenburg had known the "truth" all along, where had Brezhnev been?

Thus the new leaders began to tighten the reins on their new bourgeois artists. Most went along with this move. Yevtushenko, for example, found it quite easy to make a smooth transition from angry young man to "official" poet. He only demanded in exchange that he be permitted to travel abroad where he might hobnob with the Western society set. This he was quickly granted. Other writers refused to buckle under to so-called "re-Stalinization" of the arts. Many of these became the kernel of today's "dissident" movement. (see Chapter VI)

Of particular importance to Brezhnev was that Soviet writers abandon the kind of pacifism characteristic of art under Khrushchev. This had served its purpose. Now the Soviet leadership was actively seeking to change the hegemony of U.S. imperialism and for this a more martial spirit was needed.

Thus, at the 24th Party Congress Brezhnev called for literary works to reflect "patriotic theme." ⁸⁷ At the 5th Congress of Soviet writers, G.M. Markov, first secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, emphasized that "literature has a 'special responsibility' to army and navy personnel." He added that all efforts must be made to develop and strengthen the war tradition in Soviet literature. ⁸⁸

In particular, recent works have lauded Soviet military adventures around the world. The documentary film, *Czechoslovakia, a Year of Test*, tries to justify the social-imperialists' brutal invasion of that country. It was awarded "the state prize for literature and art."

Another documentary, *The Ocean*, "plays up Soviet revisionist social-imperialists' global maritime expansion through its portrayal of a Soviet admiral in command of fleets in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Berents Sea, the Arctic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean." In the novel, *Nuclear Submarines on the Alert*, the notion of "loafing about in one's own territorial waters" is criticized. "Before the war we did not often go to sea," the authors of this work note, "but at present a fundamental change has taken place."

Another theme of these increasingly militarist works is the glorification of the military traditions of tsardom. Accordingly, the literary magazine, *Molodaia Gvardia*, openly lauded notorious colonialists as "patriotic" heroes. The old Tsar Alexis is praised for his "patriotic" feats, though he is known for aggression and expansion. *Gold Fever*, a long novel published recently, openly defends the tsars' crimes of aggression against China. It

alleges that areas seized from China under unequal treaties (later renounced by Lenin) were "first opened up" by Russian immigrants.

Of course, under socialism works of art did encourage a militant, martial spirit among the masses, and a socialist patriotism linked with communist principles of proletarian internationalism. But in these works a careful distinction was made between real "defense of the motherland" and outright aggression. Moreover, these films were designed to mobilize and educate the masses themselves to their own defense.

Today, however, Soviet artists downgrade the role of the masses. Like their U.S. counterparts they portray technology as all-powerful and people as weak. This provides a link between the pacifism of the Khrushchev years and the militarism of today. The key difference is that under Khrushchev, socialism was being wrecked and the process of capitalist restoration was in its first

stage, while today the Soviet Union has engaged as a full-fledged imperialist superpower, wrecked by internal contradictions and forced to expand through aggression everywhere—so it is on the offensive throughout the world.

Look, for example, at the full-length feature film *Tame the Flames*, which is devoted to the race for nuclear superiority. This film takes the absurd but common imperialist position that a strong nuclear shield is the best defense against war. Thus, the film boasts of the "power" of Soviet rockets. It urges scientists to serve the military. According to *Pravda*, "*Tame the Flames* is our political film." It is "of historic significance in the deepest sense of these words." The long novel *Thunder of Rockets*, devotes a great deal of space to the dream of a rocket force commander: A nuclear war breaks out and he is sent to attack the enemy with nuclear weapons. He wins victory and the enemy is destroyed.

1. J.V. Stalin, "Report to the 15th Congress"
2. *How the Soviet Revisionists Carry Out All-Round Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR*, p. 30.
3. Same source, p. 20
4. *Newsweek*, July 17, 1974.
5. *New York Times*, October 9, 1967.
6. *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1967.
7. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, date unknown.
8. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, date unknown.
9. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, date unknown.
10. *New York Times*, December 8, 1971.
11. *Pravda*, June 18, 1971.
12. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, date unknown.
13. *New York Times*, October 4, 1971.
14. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, June 16, 1971.
15. *New York Times*, March 2, 1969.
16. *New Program of the CPSU*, 1962.
17. L. Brezhnev, "Report to the 24th Congress of the CPSU"
18. Quoted in *Peking Review*, July 19, 1974.
19. *Peking Review*, July 19, 1974.
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Soviet poster, put out in 1966, stresses central role of profits in new Soviet capitalist system. Worker in poster is holding pile of money, with word "Profit" blazed across it.

