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## DIALECTICS

*Opposites, Contradictions and Antagonisms*

The first thing to do in a discussion of opposites and contradictions is to clear up the question of definition. Most opponents of the dialectical method delight in confusing definitions. We are dealing with the definition of a condition that exists in nature in countless examples but is left out of the dictionary. Dictionaries define the concept of contrary, contradictory, as that which is diametrically different in position or nature, but does not necessarily suggest antagonism. The real understanding of what actually is going on around us starts with the problem and definition of opposites where the ordinary dictionary ends the problem. It is not the fault of the dictionary. The fault is due to the unclear, unscientific understanding of the world that surrounds us.

Our definition deals with conditions of objective reality wherein opposites are the MUTUAL, yet EXCLUSIVE positive and negative factors of a PROCESS.

In reality, the RELATIONS of opposites are objective, not subjective; are materialist, not idealistic; are mainly internal, not external; are dynamic, not static.

*The Second Error*

When the beginner at last grasps the problem of opposites and understands that it is a question of mutual, yet exclusive positive and negative factors of a process the trap is laid for a second error. Since their first concept was to mechanically separate opposites and consider them as unrelated factors the new concept that dialectically considers opposites in their proper dynamic relationship usually leads to an overemphasis on the question of the UNITY of opposites.

But the initiated in the dialectical method will reply that the unity of opposites is a correct presentation of the case. This we do not deny. We do not deny the need for emphasis on the unity of opposites if one is polemicizing against the school of thought which separates opposites and considers them as unrelated factors.

But to speak only of the unity of opposites, as against the concept that separates opposites, is not a dialectical presentation, even though it is partially correct. In presenting the actual process of opposites one must not only explain the UNITY of opposites; but at the same time one must stress the STRUGGLE of the mutually exclusive opposites.

As Lenin said, "The unity (the coincidence, identity, resultant force)

of opposites is **CONDITIONAL, TEMPORARY, TRANSITORY** and **RELATIVE**. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is **AESOLUTE**, as movement and evolution are." (my emphasis)

#### *Contradictions*

The limited, narrow definition of the word contradiction again only touches the problem and stops short where we must really begin. We go beyond this narrow confine and consider the term contradiction in the light of the discussion on the question of opposites.

Contradictions are the relations of opposites. As Hegel says, "Contradiction is the power that moves things." And as Heraclitus said, "Conflict is the mother of all happenings."

The most important point that must be made clear in our concept is that **CONTRADICTIONS ARE THE DRIVING FORCE OF CHANGE**. If we understand that opposites are not to be separated and considered one against the other; that opposites are to be considered in their unity; and that above all opposites are to be studied as a process of conflict, then we have a foundation for the study of contradictions.

If opposites are the factors of a process, and if contradictions are the relations of opposites then what is the relation of the opposites to the contradiction? Opposites and contradictions are two sides of ONE problem. Again, we are not dealing with two separate "things". Opposites and contradiction can no more be separated than matter and motion. Opposites deal with the materiality of the process, while contradictions deal with the dynamics of this relationship; as the driving force of change.

Of the laws of dialectics, the one most spoken of presents contradictions as a part of the problem of the "Laws of Opposites." It has been listed as the Unity of contradiction, the unity of opposites, of the Laws of Opposites, contradictions, etc. As study of our definitions will reveal that we do not consider the words, "opposites" and "contradictions" as synonymous, nor do we state the case here to split hairs or quibble. The close relationship, yet distinction is important to properly understand the process of nature, of objective reality. We cannot speak of opposites without speaking of contradictions, and we cannot speak of contradictions without speaking of opposites, no more than we can speak of matter without motion and vice-versa. But this in no stretch of the imagination gives us the right to lump together opposites and contradictions. Only by the proper understanding of their "separation" and their relationship can one UNITE opposites and contradiction in their totality.

#### *Marx's Example*

The best example in order to reveal the problem before us is to take

the basic and classical example of Karl Marx in presenting the fundamentals of the capitalist system.

In dealing with opposites, the Marxian literature clearly points out the conflict between productive forces and productive relations which evolve during a long period until a boiling point is reached, when new productive forces have matured within the framework of the old productive relations.

This is the basic and underlying process. It embodies the basic contradiction of the capitalist mode of production from whence all antagonisms flow: the contradiction between socialized production and capitalist private appropriation.

Here is shown the dynamic relationship of opposites to contradiction; the relation of the materiality of the process to the dynamic (dialectics) of the process.

The productive forces, in a system governed by the laws of the Accumulation of Capital, socialize production more and more; while the productive relations (that express the conflict between the seller of labor power, and the owner of the means of production) reveals the form of appropriation. These material factors, both as accumulation of capital and as the conflict of men in the class struggle, are definite factors of opposites. The contradiction is the relation of the opposites, giving rise to change.

#### *Black - White*

Let us take one of the commonest concepts of opposites -- black, white. In this example, black-white are contradictory relations of opposites. We know that the absorption or reflection of all the light rays by an object will produce black or white. The mutual, yet exclusive relation of the object to the light rays produces the color. We cannot think of one except in terms of the other. Black implies white.

#### *A Baby Chick*

After a chicken is hatched, like all other organic life, it begins anew its struggle for survival. The material opposites involved here and expressed in the constant struggle to maintain an equilibrium between the (1) organism, and (2) the environment. The contradiction created by these opposites is the process of Metabolism, the building up and the tearing down processes.

#### *Distinctions Necessary for Accuracy*

A further clarification and demarcation of the concept of opposites and contradictions is essential for the practical utilization of the dialectical materialist method. First we will deal with the question of opposites.

Basically there are two forms of opposites, the Polar opposites and the Juxta-Opposites. Polar Opposites refer to the opposites of a cycle (a) birth stage; (b) growth stage; and (c) the new decay-birth stage. We speak of Polar opposites when we compare the first condition with the third or last condition, that is, the negation of the negation. Here we are dealing with the process of development, of the past, present and future. Within one complex cycle of a long psan many more smaller cycles with their Polar Opposites will be discovered. However, within the smaller cycle they will hold the same relationship of the negation of the negation.

In certain phenomena of nature, primarily in the inorganic field and especially in dealing with electricity polar opposites are expressed at one and the same time, in the present: magnetic fields, light spectrum, etc. Juxta-opposites on the other hand refer to the positive and negative factors within any given stage of the dialectical cycle; or to the opposites between the first stage, the birth stage, and the second stage, or the first negation. Such opposites would be: Capitalists, workers; Lord, Serf; centrifugal and centripetal factors of a process; Egg and the Chicken; etc.

#### *Contradictions and Antagonisms*

Deep in the roots of every process of opposites will be found the contradictions as the driving force of change. But usually on first or even second observation, the basic contradiction eludes one's understanding. What seems to be the driving force in reality is the effects, the ANTAGONISMS, caused by the basic contradiction. Unless we penetrate below these surface "contradictions", we will never find the answer to our problem.

Every process has its contradiction and every contradiction in development produces antagonisms. Those would-be dialecticians who deny that antagonisms exist or will exist under certain conditions, yet admit the existence of the contradiction, don't know what they are talking about. Every OBSERVED and ANALYZED process reveals both its contradiction and its antagonisms. We are not here concerned with the modified form or intensified form of the antagonism or antagonisms. We merely want here to stress the fact that a contradiction always produces antagonisms. If the equilibrium can be maintained with the least possible antagonism that goes for durability, but does not eliminate the antagonism and the struggle to overcome it.

#### *Another Example of Marx*

Again we think that the best example for our problem is in the field of political economy as presented by Karl Marx. We have already presented the contradiction between socialized production and capitalist private appropriation as the key to the understanding and the solution of the problem of capitalist society. Let us now present a few of the antagonisms that flow out of this basic contradiction:

- 1-The antagonisms of the working class and the capitalist class.
- 2-The antagonisms between the organization of production in the individual workshop and the anarchy of production in society in general
- 3-The antagonism between production and markets.
- 4-The antagonisms between production and national boundaries.
- 5-The antagonisms among the exploiters.
- 6-The antagonism between accumulation of wealth at one pole, and "overpopulation" and accumulation of misery, slavery, exploitation and subjection and degradation at the other pole.

#### *A Four-fold Relation*

In considering the relation between contradiction and antagonisms the investigator must consider as the minimum, not a two-fold relation of positive and negative, but a four-fold relation.

The two sides of a contradiction represent a positive and a negative force, but this does not hang by itself. Each side of the contradiction also has its own positive and negative relationship, and a clear and scientific analysis must unearth these relations as well as the first two main sides of the problem. To really understand the two-sides of the contradiction one must unearth and understand the four-fold relations of the opposites.

This brings us back to where we started, but on a higher plane. To analyze the four-fold relations one must check the opposites, the contradictions and the antagonisms. It again reveals (in more detail) that opposites and contradictions are merely two sides of one problem.

#### *Change Through Contradictions.*

As Lenin pointed out in his Critique of Hegel's Logic, the usual thinking grasps the difference and the contradiction but not the transition from the former to the latter; but this is the most important." It is not only a question of the unity of opposites or of the struggle of opposites; it is also transformation of the thesis to its anti-thesis, etc. As Heraclitus once said, "Being and Non-Being -- these two extremes come together in the concept of Becoming."

The logic of Aristotle considers all things as motionless and changeless, isolated and separate from all other things; while dialectics considers all things in their motion, in their interconnection. For dialecticians there is only ONE Constant factor (and its manifestations) and that is CHANGEABLENESS.

For the Logician contradictions are products of the mind and contradictions in things are derived from the mind. For the dialectician contradictions as conceived in the mind are only reflections of actual matter in the motion, of objective reality.

Once we have grasped the necessity of considering all things in their motion, we must then consider the division of the single into its opposing parts, and the understanding of the contradictions. Nature does not present opposites as labeled and wrapped packages awaiting our pleasure. Our first observation is usually greeted by what seemingly is a single unified whole---or the opposite extreme, two unrelated factors that seemingly have no close relation. It is up to the investigator to determine the relationship and the direction of the development of the internal contradictions.

#### *Tools of Investigation*

One of the most complicated aspects of dialectics is its two-fold relation. Dialectics is first and above all the general laws of matter in motion; and second as a reflection of these general laws it represents the scientific theory of knowledge. As such it becomes the most important method of investigation. Therefore, the concepts presented in regard to nature, society or the human thought are likewise true of the method of investigation.

1- From our point of view, theory is an accumulation and reflection of practice to be used as a guide to action. The problem of theory can be nothing else than a problem of practice. This reveals the contradiction of the two aspects of the problem. One posed against the other is mechanical and will result in unscientific conclusions. Only by a unity of the opposites, and yet a struggle (in action) of these opposites can the problem be solved. Great practice requires great theory.

2- Continuity and discontinuity are two sides of one problem, representing the mutual, yet exclusive relation of opposites. The mechanical separation of these two factors results on the one hand in "scientific" conclusions which are mechanistic fatalism, and on the other hand in "scientific" conclusions which are indeterminism. Both are wrong. The corpuscular theory of matter and the wave theory of light and the contradiction physics has trapped itself in by the two "opposite" theories of light, reveals this undialectical thinking. The wave and the mass are also merely two sides of one problem. In electricity the simplest, yet most all

embracing general law of nature reveals itself in this two-fold relationship.

The study of Energy reveals that it is indissolubly bound up with the transformation of one form of matter in motion into another form of matter in motion. Electricity as the "free electron" form, not only presents its dialectical "face" through positive and negative relations; but also through its continuity as a "wave" and its discontinuity as a "mass". The dialectical theory of electricity will be a higher unity of the two "opposing" theories of today.

3- Freedom and necessity are closely connected. "Freedom consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore a product of historical development." (AntiDuhring) The relation of freedom and necessity is the base of the problem of "free will and determinism". In investigating this problem, this dual relationship of opposites will have to be answered. Those "scientists" who have separated these two aspects and have answered the problem either way (in relation to their own field of investigation) have been unable to come to satisfactory conclusions. Again the contradictory relationship must be understood.

4- Evolutionary and revolutionary change are merely two sides of one problem. No change takes place without the "slow, gradual" evolutionary transformation without the "quick" revolutionary development. Evolutionary changes are accumulative changes that alter the form and lay the basis for revolutionary changes which alter the CONTENT of the matter in motion considered. When we speak of revolutionary changes we are equating the term to the dialectical concept of quantity-quality change.

We will list several more two-fold aspects of the problem of investigation, all factors that reveal a relationship of opposites:

- 5- Variable and Constant factors.
- 6- Relative and Absolute factors.
- 7- Centralization and Diversification.
- 8- Centrifugal and Centripetal forces.
- 9- Uneven and Combined Development.
- 10- Form and Content.
- 11- General and Particular.
- 12- Part and Whole.

- 13- Quality and Quantity
- 14- Positive and Negative Factors.
- 15- Cause and Effect.

In each given case of investigation the concretization of the above aspects of the problem of the two-fold relation will differ. One must find the internal laws of a given process; one cannot mechanically force the measuring rod of opposites upon something.

However, the following can be stated as a general rule for all of the above two-fold factors:

- a- The single must be "broken" into its opposing parts to reveal the contradiction and the relation of the two-fold factors of opposites.
- b- The unity of opposites is relative, limited, transitory.
- c- The struggle of opposites is absolute.
- d- At a given moment the dominant factor must be found. There always exists the determinate factor.
- e- That the struggle of opposites is developing to a transformation of one pole to the other.
- f- That contradictions are the driving force of change.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION.

History is not made out of the whole cloth. Thus Marx pointed out almost a century ago that the course of history can not be charted as a straight line. It has its by-ways, side lanes, offshoots, and zigzags. The main themes of history, the main directions, can be traced and analyzed, charted and catalogued. But this main stream has its side-streams, too.

For instance, the Feudal regimes in both France and England, before the Bourgeois Revolution, was a strange mixture of the old Feudal order and considerable bourgeois strong points. At one stage in the history of both nations the contending classes were so closely matched that an Absolutist Monarchy, resting on the old Feudal order, nevertheless balanced itself between the classes, and gained its strength precisely from this even or almost even division of strength.

In 1851 the adventurer Louis Bonaparte in France rose to power and balanced himself on the opposition between the peasantry and the bourgeoisie, although he upheld the bourgeois system in the end, and although he left bourgeois property relations intact throughout. "On December 4th (1851) Bonaparte gave it (the bourgeoisie) a taste of the future it had prophesied when he had the most respectable burghers of the Boulevard Montmartre and the Boulevard des Italiens shot, while they sat at their windows, by the soldier of the army of order." Thus Marx describes the advent of Bonaparte to power in the Bourgeois Republic of France in 1851.

"Not until the second Bonaparte rose to power does the State seem to have become completely independent", says Marx (18th Brumaire, page 132) "...The State authority has solid foundations. Bonaparte represents a class, the class of those who form a considerable majority in French society, the peasantry".

The story of Louis Bonaparte is an object lesson for all those who attempt to give "simple" answers to the character of the Soviet Union. A bourgeois state which "oppresses" the bourgeoisie, very much like the present Workers State slashes at the proletariat.

Marx goes through one act after another of the Bonapartist regime to show how it tries to alternately cajole and alternately repress one class after another; how one step leads to another. "Bonaparte throws the whole bourgeois economy into confusion, lays sacrilegious hands on everything which the revolution of 1848 had regarded as sacred, makes some tolerant of revolution and others eager for revolution, and generates anarchy in the name of order."

Engel's in his "Origin of the Family" deals with a state where the warring classes so nearly attain equilibrium that the state power, ostensibly appearing as a mediator, assumes for the moment a certain independence.

But despite all these "aberrations" on the part of a Bonaparte or an Absolute Monarchist the regimes remain basically what their economy is. "Obviously", says Marx, "the bourgeoisie had no alternative... After the coup d'etat the French bourgeoisie exclaimed: 'only the chief of the Society of December the Tenth (Bonaparte) can save capitalist society.'"

The zig zags of Bonaparte - to take only one example from history - are legion. For a shorter period the same may be said of the would-be egalitarian, Robespierre, during the French Revolution. The same may be said, in part, for some factions of the Diggers during the English Revolution. Classes in power are not always represented by a State which serves them in a direct and forthright fashion. The State always reflects, aside from the general interests of the ruling class as a whole, the special interests of one or more sections of that class. But sometimes it goes even beyond that. Thus Robespierre slaughters the sands of Bourgeois in the midst of a BOURGEOIS Revolution, while making some concessions to the proletariat and peasantry.

The State is an instrument of the ruling class, as Lenin points out - but not quite so simple or direct. The state is an instrument of the ruling class in the broad historical sense, not always in the day to day actions of that State. The State even under Hitler (and even under Roosevelt) must sometimes take action against the immediate interests of the capitalist class as a whole, in order to safeguard its historic interests. Thus, for instance, profit limits and ceilings, or higher taxes.

The Soviet State too must be analyzed from its broad historical interests and aims, from its deep-rooted economy, rather than from its day to day acts. Very true, the Soviet Union government imprisons and kills workers, even Marxists; at times (i.e. 1929-35) it lowers the standards of living; it has set up as tight a dictatorship as our old absolute Monarchists and Louis Bonaparte - (for very similar reasons, by the way); it even abolishes the workers' organs, Soviets. But these gyrations, zig zags and instabilities can all be explained historically. Basically they must be understood as the result of the unstable equilibrium - on a world scale - between the proletariat, with state power in one country, and the bourgeoisie, with state power everywhere else. Its "peculiarities" are due to this circumstance; but its ESSENCE and its POTENTIAL is determined by other factors, by the extension of the October Revolution and the mode of production it brought into being.

## II

After the October Revolution the Bolsheviki found themselves in power in a nation in greater chaos than almost any other nation in history. The Imperialist War and the Civil War that followed had so cut into the Russian

economy that in 1921 production had fallen to only 17% of the low levels of 1913. Even agriculture was only at 52% pre-war level. The Soviet Union had given up at Brest-Litovsk an area in which more than one-fourth its factories and its production was concentrated.

The Revolution had to build on the basis of its own strength. Not a single power would give it any extensive credits (as for instance Morgan gave Italy after the war). It had to grow and reorganize a nation of famine and death, only by more sacrifice and more sweat.

Under Lenin it was unanimously conceded that only the Social Revolution in the major capitalist countries, particularly Germany, could lift the Soviet Union out of the crisis; that as an island within a capitalist sea, the Soviet Union was bound to degenerate and perish. Lenin banked considerably on the Revolution in Germany.

Even Stalin in 1924 readily admitted this in his "Theories and Practice of Leninism" - "Can we succeed and secure the definite victory of Socialism in one country without the combined efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries? Most certainly not."

But by 1924 the Revolution had been defeated in Germany and a dozen other countries. The proletariat gasped out of breath from its first post-war efforts and the petty-bourgeoisie inside and outside Russia began to take heart, to gain vigor and strength. Petty-bourgeois ideology crept into the very marrow of the Workers State and from then on began to corrupt it.

Stalin and Bukharin developed in 1924 the famous theory of "Socialism in One country". These petty-bourgeois manifestations on the part of Stalin in particular had been evidenced during October 1917 and during March of that year, when Stalin counselled compromise with Menshevism and even (in March) organic unity with it. In 1924 with world reaction on the offensive, it was a relatively simple matter to yield to these petty-bourgeois tendencies again.

From this basic fallacy everything else in the Soviet Union flows.

"Socialism" in Stalin's thinking, (so long as capitalism exists on a world scale) can be built only by preparing for the defense of the Workers State against the capitalist world. To do so it is necessary to bring the backward Russian economy up to the level of the big bourgeois nations. But the Soviet regime is always working against time. It must prepare to defend itself against the inevitable continuation of the counter-revolution and intervention of 1918-1921. It does so in two ways:

1-It gives up revolutionary politics in the world arena in favor of politics of the status-quo, purely bourgeois alliances with one power against another in order to neutralize both, and purely reformist politics within each capitalist nation in order to gain a status-quo, not revolution,

2-It concentrates its efforts on building "socialism" in one country and makes a whole series of basic economic errors from 1923 to date, one of the major ones being the concentration on building up its heavy industries to the neglect of the quantity and quality of consumers goods.

The effects of this factor lead to defeats such as the Chinese proletariat, 1925-27, the English proletariat 1926, The German proletariat, the Spanish proletariat 1936-38. The politics of bourgeois alliances and status-quo also helps the imperialists start their second imperialist war.

But it is the effects of part of the second factor we wish to trace in this article.

From 1923 to 1928 the Russian peasant begins to reestablish his production, but the Soviet factories - with their still backward technique - are unable to supply the peasant with enough consumers goods. So he withholds his supplies from the market. Trotsky introduces the first five year program that has a balanced relation between development of capital industries and consumers goods in industries, so that the general level of the masses could be bettered; and a program for gradual collectivization, first through cooperative buying, selling, use of machines, etc.

The program of the left Opposition at that time represented a correct perspective - build the Russian economy, but build it in such a way that it depends not on itself alone for its sustenance and growth but properly coordinates with the key problem of the extension of the October Revolution. Thus the proletariat's lot could be bettered; the peasantry could be assured more goods and would stop withholding goods from the market; and the basic economy too would be considerably augmented.

But Stalinism rejected this program. It had already given up hope in the World Revolution. It had to build Socialism in ONE Country, isolated within a capitalist world. Consequently its tempo for the development of capital goods industries had to be much more rapid than that of the Marxist Left Opposition. And consequently too it had to neglect consumers goods.

The Stalin-Buchanin right-center bloc first bitterly opposed the left opposition plans for industrialization. They called it unrealistic.

From 1923 to 28 these bureaucrats capitulated to the kulaks at home (and the reformist agents abroad) and carried through a slow tempo of industrialization and the "Enrich Yourself" Kulak policy.

By 1928 Stalinism felt the pressure of the proletariat as well as the poor peasants and the defeat of the Chinese revolution and the world wide capitalist crisis that was developing. They swung to the other extreme - the snail pace was changed to a rapid pace of industrialization that intensified the antagonisms already developing.

On a world scale a left zig-zag of the "Third Period" took place. Left in tactics, but further in the right opportunist direction in principles.

Thus from 1928 - 1935 the Soviet Union again must resort to rationing - since there is a shortage of goods; it must lower the standard of living of the masses (who had at last in 1928 obtained a slightly higher level than in 1913); and it must, above all, forcibly collectivize the peasantry. We do not give the figures here - they can easily be obtained in Yugow's book, or in the Foreign Policy Association pamphlets by Zimand or by Vera Micheles Deans, or a dozen other sources. But the facts are corroborated by all authors and even hinted at by the Stalinists themselves.

Since there is not enough consumers goods the peasant still refuses to send his grain to the market. He hides and hoards it. By 1929 this develops into a "Bloodless Peasant Revolution" - the food supply is threatened. Stalin has completely failed to foresee this, although the Left Opposition had pointed it out. The Soviet Bureaucracy must now get that food and must get it fast. But it can not get it in a normal manner, by increasing the production of consumers goods; it must now use force. Instead of slow collectivization based on the education and enlightenment of the peasant masses, it suddenly must turn to rapid - monstrously rapid - collectivization at the point of a bayonet. In the process at least 4 million peasants lose their lives (Trotsky figures 9 million) and over half the live stock is slaughtered. But by forcible collectivization the problem is temporarily answered: food again begins to flow to the city.

Without sufficient consumers goods, Stalinism finds it must ration almost everything. Up until 1928 the money wages received by Soviet workers were unimportant: they received rent free, free street car rides, free theatres, free schools, free medical care, and considerable free food. But all this is based on a very backward economy, in which the supply of goods is very limited. Even so, however, the ruble is relatively stable. But from 1928 on, during the first five year plan, the ruble begins to do all sorts of tricks. Without enough consumers goods, Stalinism tries by political ukase to outlaw the law of supply and demand, thus further plunging the economy into disorder, because without a stable currency in the early stages of transition economy it is impossible to gauge demand and thus difficult to plan production correctly.

By 1935 the Soviet masses begin to revolt at the forced levy on their wages, at the reduction of their living standards. The revolt takes on negative forms - slow downs absenteeism, sabotage, misuse of machinery (something like the Luddite movement of the 19th century) The class struggle



begins to bubble again. Stalin is forced to take counter-measures - the brutal purges, the murder and imprisonment of tens of thousands.

But he must also take other retreat measures. He must grant a moderate increase in pay; he must make a retreat on the land question. He gives land perpetuity to the Collectives. He gives each peasant, a private piece of land for his own exploitation in addition, and some livestock. He attempts to divide the proletariat by the piece work system of Stakhanovism (which is horribly misused and which degenerates into sheer "record breaking", not industrial efficiency); and he increases the pay of the technicians and skilled workers. The gap of one to three between the highest and lowest paid worker becomes a gap of one to twenty (plus, in many instances bonuses and graft.)

Without the checks and balances of the democratic Soviets and Trade Unions, the Workers State under Stalinism yields more and more to the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois elements, who today comprise a very appreciable force in the Soviet Union. The regime takes many steps backward in the social sphere, compromises with religion, a reactionary official view on marriage, a new officer caste in the army, etc.

But we must remember, all of this is based on the need - the desperate need - of Stalinism to maintain the world status-quo and the internal status-quo within Russia so as to build up the capital goods industry to the point where the Workers State can defend itself against any military combination. As was to be expected Stalinism never achieved this goal (despite its lies and bragging). It never even came close, although the progress of the Soviet Union is phenomenal. But that was the fundamental fallacy of Stalinism - that it hoped and expected it could build an economy strong enough within one country to be able to withstand the onslaughts of world capitalism.

Stalinism has failed and failed miserably. In its failure it has dragged the world proletariat back 30 years. The very fact that Russia is today at war is a testament to the betrayal by Stalinism and their failure to spread the revolution, particularly since the Red Army is incapable of a decisive military victory (although it fights heroically and has many great achievements).

But the failure of Stalinism must be understood in the workers realm in the same light as the failures of Louis Bonaparte, and the failure of Robespierre in the bourgeois revolutions.

Balanced between an equilibrium of the contending classes of modern society, and trying to make concessions to both, Stalinism has undermined the structure of the Soviet Union to the point where its basic character is challenged.

In 1935-38 Stalinism was challenged by both the bourgeois elements and the proletarian elements - but primarily by the latter. The battle flared up into a relatively high point of the class struggle. This historical event, so little dealt with in our present and historical analyses of the Soviet Union, justifies the position of the Marxists that the Soviet Union, under Stalinism, was on the brink of either capitalist restoration or political revolution. In this first major engagement, Stalinism romped off with the victory against both forces and thus even strengthened itself.

But new engagements are coming. The war makes them inevitable. The question still remains, either counter-revolution to restore capitalism, or a political revolution to restore workers democracy and extend the October Revolution.

The presence of Stalinism has knocked Soviet economy full of holes, like a Swiss cheese; but it has not yet destroyed the basic character of that economy or the basic character of State Power.

### III.

The very fact that the British and American imperialists are today so fearful if a further Red offensive, should indicate to the reformists and ultra-lefts who deny the Workers' character of the Soviet State, that the Red Army is feared for precisely its revolutionary potential, that its very presence is a material aid to the maturing revolution, of the highest order. The role of the Red Army in Poland and the Baltic countries, although only slightly studied, showed that its first and immediate reactions were the setting up of Workers Soviet Republics - although unfortunately in the course of a few days or weeks the GPU came onto the scene and degenerated these Republics to the level of Stalinism elsewhere in Russia.

But these facts are only indications. The basic character of the Soviet State is to be found in its economy.

Here is a nation which in 12 years from 1928 to 1940 increased its production by 65%. The highest increase in any ten years for a capitalist nation was the American increase of 120% from 1880 to 1890. And this increase was achieved in the midst of the greatest world depression, without any appreciable credits from any capitalist nation.

Soviet economy unlike capitalist economy (including the economy of Germany), is concerned with the world market and markets in general only in a secondary sense. Exports and imports are less than one half the exports and imports even under Czarist Russia, and are steadily shrinking (up to the present war, that is). The maxim of world capitalism: "export or die" certainly does not hold true of the Soviet Union. And there is practically no export or import of CAPITAL at all.

Russian economy, unlike Capitalist economy, is not glutted with a capital surplus, with billions of dollars in gold at Fort Knox with no place to be invested. Capital investments of the Soviet State in economy have been phenomenal (although it must be admitted much of it has come out of the hide of the working class through a very high turnover tax). The State has put up new factories and new means of production amounting to a few hundred billion rubles - and it put it up precisely when world capitalism, because of its overproduction, had to retire the means of production.

Russian economy is relatively free from the crises of overproduction ever present in capitalist economy - despite the fact that its production has grown at a faster rate than anything ever before seen. The Russian market is not a halter around the neck of its economy. The market expands directly with the expansion of production.

Above all there is no private appropriation within the Soviet Union. No one may hire and exploit the labor of anyone else. Although incomes have risen enormously no one may still earn more than approximately \$30,000. per year (a high figure, and one to be condemned for a Workers' State but very low compared to earnings in the capitalist nations). And above all not a cent of this money may be reinvested in the productive process.

Literacy in the Soviet Union has increased at an unbelievable rapid tempo - in almost one generation. Free schools, free medical attention, many social reforms (maternity leaves, unemployment compensation, vacation resorts etc.), the 6 and 7 hour days (until the war began, when the 8 hour day was introduced), and many other such social characteristics clearly indicate that we are dealing not with capitalism, and not with any "new" society, but with a Workers' State being undermined by the pressure of world capitalism.

Those who look for "managerial revolutions", like the dilettante professor Burnham, or for "something new", in this situation, just choose to forget that history is not made of the whole cloth, that it has these aberrations and zig-zags.

The Revolutionary Marxists recognize these zig-zags and understand the potentials of Soviet economy and the Red Army. We recognize that overnight in the process of the imperialist war these forces may again become the most mighty force for the maturing of World Revolution. And this despite, and in fact, against Stalinism.

To fail to reckon on this in the present period is fatal for an international strategy.

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