



Theoretical journal
of the Socialist
Party of Australia

Australian Marxist Review

- ★ *Power and Democracy*
- ★ *Industrial Concentration and the Impact
of Changed Conditions*
- ★ *Building the Party in the Workplace*
- ★ *The Crisis in the Socialist World*
- ★ *Marxist theory under fire*
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- ★ *Critical and United*
- ★ *Developments in some
socialist countries*

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The Editorial Board apologises that due to the illness of the Executive Editor, it was not possible to bring out the June issue of the *Australian Marxist Review*. The current issue is therefore an extended, double issue.

Power and Democracy

by
by Alan Miller
Victorian State Secretary
Socialist Party of Australia

This paper was given at a meeting of the national leadership of the Democratic Socialist Party and the Central Committee Executive of the Socialist Party of Australia held in Sydney on April 26, 1990. It is presented here in edited form.

I will try and respond to the often heard plea of "getting back to Leninism". I will therefore rely heavily on Comrade Lenin. At the same time, Lenin himself emphasised that change occurs continuously and we must not treat theory as a dogma. In addition, certain concepts remain valid even for a lengthy period. I will attempt to make clear and to back up those instances where I believe concepts retain their basic validity.

The question of power and democracy is bound up with the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and this is a concept which does retain its validity. Further, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not fully understood by many in the communist movement and this lack of understanding contributes to a certain confusion concerning the concept and, in some cases, to its rejection. A re-study of the concept, therefore, is well justified.

Lenin certainly held the view that the concept was very basic to revolutionary theory. Following the October Revolution, Lenin defined what he called "the new era of world history" as follows:

"The abolition of capitalism and its vestiges, and the establishment of the fundamentals of the communist order comprise the content of the new era of world history that has set in. It is inevitable that the slogans of our era are and must be: abolition of classes; the dictatorship of the proletariat for the purpose of achieving that aim; the ruthless exposure of petty bourgeois democratic prejudices concerning freedom and equality and ruthless war of these prejudices." (1)

It is worth noting that Lenin was not making some casual remark about

some episode of no great historical importance. He was defining an era. Therefore his use of the term dictatorship of the proletariat is of some significance. His use of the words "ruthless war" on "petty bourgeois democratic prejudices" is also of particular interest.

Communists are obliged to continue waging a "ruthless war" as "petty bourgeois democratic prejudices" remain a feature of the contemporary world.

Lenin, indeed, held a strong view concerning such prejudices. He said:

"Those who try to solve the problems involved in the transition from capitalism to socialism on the basis of general talk about liberty, equality, democracy in general ... thereby only reveal their petty-bourgeois and philistine nature and ideologically slavishly follow in the wake of the bourgeoisie. The correct solution of this problem can be found only in a concrete study of the specific relations between the specific class which has conquered political power, namely, the proletariat, and the whole non-proletarian, and also the semi-proletarian, mass of the working population — relations which do not take shape in fantastically harmonious, 'ideal' conditions, but in the real conditions of the frantic resistance of the bourgeoisie which assumes many and diverse forms." (2)

This "frantic resistance" continues today and it "assumes many and diverse forms", sometimes of a very sophisticated nature.

Examination of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a justified exercise as there is insufficient understanding of this question among communists. This lack of understanding expresses itself by regarding the dictatorship of the proletariat mainly as suppression of the old class forces and not seeing to a sufficient degree the ideological aspect.

Ideology can be defined as a system of ideas covering such areas as philosophy, political economy, politics, organisation, aesthetics and ethics.

True, Lenin did not neglect the suppressive aspect. He said:

"But the dictatorship of the proletariat i.e. the organisation of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of crushing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must crush them in order to free humanity from wage slavery: their resistance must be broken by force; it is clear that where there is suppression there is also violence, there is no freedom, no democracy." (3)

In other definitions, Lenin refers to the various elements in the ideological role of the dictatorship. He wrote:

"If we translate the Latin, scientific, historico-philosophical term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' into simpler language, it means just the following. Only a definite class, namely, the urban workers and the factory, industrial workers

in general, is able to lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people in the struggle to throw off the yoke of capital, in actually carrying it out, in the struggle to maintain and consolidate the victory, in the work of creating the new, socialist social system and in the entire struggle for the complete abolition of classes.” (4)

Particular attention should be given to the last part of this statement where it refers to “the work of creating the new, socialist social system” and the “struggle for the complete abolition of classes”, ideological tasks of enormous proportions.

In the socialist countries, fascists are active, people openly advocate the return of capitalism, monarchists parade in the street and nationalist extremism leads to murder. Can we say then that the ideological work of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been completed because the struggle for the “complete abolition of classes” has been victorious?

Lenin spoke of “re-educating, under the proletarian dictatorship, millions of peasants and small proprietors, hundreds of thousands of office employees, officials and bourgeois intellectuals, of subordinating all these to the proletarian state and to proletarian leadership, of overcoming their bourgeois habits and traditions.” (5)

In view of the recent evidence of continued “bourgeois habits and traditions” in the socialist countries, how can we say that the dictatorship of the proletariat is no longer required?

In some socialist countries workers, and even working class parties, have yielded to one degree or another to social democracy. This reveals the wisdom of Lenin's words that “it is necessary to re-educate — in a protracted struggle, on the soil of the dictatorship of the proletariat — the proletarians themselves, who do not abandon their petty bourgeois prejudices at one stroke, by a miracle, at the behest of the Virgin Mary, at the behest of a slogan, resolution or decree, but only in the course of a long and difficult mass struggle against mass petty bourgeois influence.” (6)

It is obvious that the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat is many-sided to say the least. Lenin expressed this many-sidedness this way:

“The dictatorship of the proletariat is a persistent struggle --bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative — against the forces and traditions of the old society.” (7)

The dictatorship of the proletariat expresses the dialectical relationship between dictatorship and democracy. Working class power and socialist democracy are interconnected. One can say that this relationship is the essence of the socialist state.

In his examination of the socialist state, Lenin touched on this vexed question of democracy. He said:

“Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people — this is the change democracy undergoes during the **transition** from

capitalism to communism.

"Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no difference between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), only then does 'the state ... cease to exist', and it **'becomes possible to speak of freedom'**. Only then will really complete democracy, democracy without any exceptions, be possible and be realised. And only then will democracy itself begin to **wither away** owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually **become accustomed** to observing the elementary rules of social life that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims; they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, without the **special apparatus** for compulsion which is called the state." (8)

We need to re-study Lenin's concept of the class nature of democracy and also his concept that "democracy without any exceptions" is only possible in classless society and that "only then will democracy itself begin to wither away". We need to re-study these concepts in the light of the views expressed that suggest that there is pure democracy and that "democracy without any exceptions" is possible in socialist countries today.

Evidence in the socialist countries of reactionary and anti-social behaviour has already been referred to. It is obvious that these countries are a long way from the classless society of communism when democracy will be complete and then wither away. People in these countries are a long way from "observing the elementary rules of social life" free from class influences.

Lenin's views remain sound and the advances made by anti-communist forces in the socialist countries today are due partly to the abandonment of Lenin's approach.

Of course, Lenin's view concerning the state is challenged. Central Committee member of the Polish United Workers' Party, Adam Lopatka, said in December 1988:

"It has been customary to view the socialist state as the instrument of domination by one part of society over others, but now there is a growing need to see it as an organisation of all citizens which must primarily help society to solve its major problems." (9)

No wonder we have the present unhappy situation in Poland.

Clearly, in the light of Lenin's approach, there needs to be a re-appraisal of the thesis advanced by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union concerning the state of the whole people.

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat contains within it fundamental propositions of scientific communism. These include the leading role of the communist party, working class internationalism and the allies of the working class.

Lenin placed a lot of emphasis on the leading role of the communist party. In fact, he said:

“The dictatorship of the proletariat would not work except through the communist party.” (10)

The proposition that in order to lead the complicated, many-sided struggle to communism, the working class requires a special organised force basing itself on scientific ideological concepts remains valid. There does not appear to be any evidence that the working class can dispense with such an organisation. Indeed the lack of struggle to combat anti-communism, the confusion and the examples of anarchism which are evident in some socialist countries come mainly from the downgrading of the leading role of the communist party.

Because the dictatorship of the proletariat does contain fundamental scientific communist propositions, it is in itself a profound concept to be protected against ideological vandalism. Lenin was correct when he went so far as to say:

“A Marxist is one who extends the acceptance of the class struggle to the acceptance of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” (11)

As mentioned above, lack of understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat can sometimes lead to rejection of the concept. This applies even to those who hold leading positions in the communist movement.

For example, at a *World Marxist Review* seminar entitled “Perestroika in the USSR and the International Communist Movement”, reported in *World Marxist Review* September 1988, Professor Yuri Krasin, Rector of the Social Sciences Institute under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, said:

“Take, say, the dictatorship of the proletariat, a cardinal concept of Marxist theory. We all know that this phrase is virtually no longer used in the documents of the communist movement. Is that accidental? Is that a scholastic point? No, it is not. It simply reflects a change in our conceptual apparatus which reflects new realities. In developed capitalist countries, a modern working class is taking shape, and the subject of social transformations is itself changing qualitatively. A technological revolution is occurring. This revolution is transferring the bulk of manpower to informatics and the services. That manpower is becoming to an ever greater extent, as Marx put it, a combination of social forces that includes the intellectual potential of society, science. A completely new worker is emerging, differing greatly from what he was in the 1920s, 1940s or 1950s.

“Delegates representing communist parties of developed capitalist countries are taking part in our discussions, and I think they’ll agree that the transition of their nations to socialism is more likely to become possible through the consensus of a majority of the population. Naturally, in that case, too, the contemporary working class and the Marxist forces must discharge their function and play their progressive, vanguard role. But the class-based nature and

methods of exercising power during the period of transition will hardly be consonant with what has come to be known as the dictatorship of the proletariat. The new realities require new concepts.”

Krasin says that the changes in the composition of the working class due to technological change demand a concept that requires a “consensus of the majority of the population” and for the “working class and Marxist forces” to “play their progressive, vanguard role”.

That is exactly what the dictatorship of the proletariat is all about, as we have seen from our examination of Lenin's approach. Krasin is unconsciously confirming that the changes in the working class due to technological change do not require that the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat be abandoned. Yet Krasin calls precisely for its abandonment. It is clear that Krasin has no conception of what the dictatorship of the proletariat entails.

Let us now examine further the anatomy of the dictatorship of the proletariat from capitalism to communism. We need to note the complex process of state functions giving way to self-governance. Lenin considered that the Party had to fight hard to ensure this process took place. He wrote the Second Program of the Bolshevik Party adopted at the Eighth Congress in 1919. The program said:

“Proletarian, or Soviet democracy has turned the mass organisations of the capitalism-oppressed classes, the proletarians and the poorest semi-proletarian peasants, i.e., the vast majority of the population, into the permanent and sole basis of the entire state apparatus; the local and the central, from top to bottom. In this way the Soviet state realised, among other things, local and regional self-governance, without any authorities being appointed from the top whatsoever, in a much wider form than anywhere else. The party's task is tirelessly to work for the actual and full translation into life of this highest type of democracy, which requires a constant rise in the cultural standards, organisation and initiative action by the masses, if it is to function correctly.” (12)

It was precisely the problem of lack of cultural standards which hindered the self governance process. Lenin noted this when he wrote:

“The result of ... (the) low cultural level is that the Soviets which by virtue of their program are organs of government by the working people are in fact organs of government for the working people by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole.” (13)

In making an estimation of the history of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, this problem must be taken into account.

The actual process of state functions to self-governance is certainly no simple matter. It is certainly not just a question of power from below.

Lenin said that “‘only from below’ is an anarchist principle.” (14)

State and self governance forms will exist together in a dialectical relationship, one having an impact on the other, as we move towards communism and the withering away of the state.

The role of the communist party is vital in this process. There is the danger of the party being downgraded so that the process is left to spontaneity and a degeneration to anarchy. There is also the danger of the process being hindered by the party organisation itself trying to replace the process.

In some of the socialist countries the immediate danger is the playing down and, in some cases, what amounts to the elimination of the party's influence.

It is important at this stage to say something about the history of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the period when Stalin was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In examining this most complex and extremely contradictory period, a simplified and subjective approach does not serve us well. There is need for a deep examination of all the processes and factors involved but only a brief summary of the period is possible here.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union leadership under Stalin did take account of the two aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat — the suppressive and the ideological — but there were shortcomings in both directions.

In the Stalin period, there was considerable achievement in the ideological sphere. The Soviet Union advanced from extreme backwardness to a socialist power which caused anguish in the imperialist world. Even the powerful armies of fascism, backed by the rich resources of Europe, could not crush the new socialist Soviet Union.

In the USSR, there was much positive work in the areas of philosophy, political economy, politics, organisation, artistic culture and so on. Yet, despite these achievements, the kind of deep and persistent ideological work that Lenin spoke about was not achieved. Directives in themselves are not an evil, but too often they were not backed up by sufficient ideological work or the directives replaced the necessary ideological work.

This was brought about by objective factors. Against the background of cultural backwardness which Lenin spoke about, the Soviet Union had to conduct a forced march. This was because of the imperialist encirclement and the rise of fascism. However, subjective factors concerning Stalin's own approach played a role in these shortcomings.

As regards the suppressive aspect of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union leadership under Stalin cultivated a super vigilance. One can understand the objective basis for such vigilance. The internal and external class enemy was very active. However, excesses took place, including events which can only be described as criminal. Besides objective pressures which could lead to excesses, there were obviously subjective factors, including, once more, those associated with Stalin's own approach.

It is necessary to comment on Stalin's own personal contribution to what happened in the Soviet Union and, of course, the influence this had on the international movement. In the history of literature about Stalin, there have

been extremes. He was a model communist, perfection itself, in the cult period. Then, in a later period, he became an evil tyrant.

He was neither. There is sufficient evidence to show that he had considerable capacity in the area of ideology and possessed certain positive personal qualities. At the same time, he had significant shortcomings in his ideological and personal approach. Taking into account all the objective and subjective factors, we can say that Stalin, as a communist, took his place on the stage of history with both achievements and crimes. That is a contradiction, but life is full of contradictions.

It is important to make the point that the Stalin period in no way invalidates the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A communist approach, as expressed by Lenin, links power with democracy. Proletarian power is served by socialist democracy. Bourgeois power is served by capitalist democracy.

However, our experience with the bourgeois mass media and in the bourgeois academic arena reveals that the capitalist class tries to combat this communist approach with propaganda about pure democracy. And democracy is presented as pluralism. Pluralism, say the capitalists, is practised under capitalism and it ought to be practised under socialism.

Let's look at this question of pluralism. The starting point is to examine ideological pluralism.

Although there are many so-called schools of thought, there are two ideologies which reflect the proletariat versus bourgeois antagonistic struggle which remains basic in a class divided world. Bourgeois ideology serves the purposes of the bourgeoisie and, in the contemporary world, particularly the imperialist bourgeoisie. Scientific communist ideology serves the purposes of the proletariat throughout the world.

The two ideologies are in constant conflict and one seeks to defeat the other. There can be no ideal situation in which both exist side by side merely have a "tea and biscuits" debate and respecting each others right to exist as equals. This applies to capitalism and socialism.

The plurality of political parties should be seen in the light of these points about ideological struggle. There is no ideal situation where political parties representing the antagonistic conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat can simply conduct their relations as equals. One party seeks to defeat the other.

If bourgeois parties exist under socialism, it simply expresses the fact that bourgeois forces, internally and externally, have been at least partly successful in their struggle to defeat socialism and return to capitalism.

No one knows this better than the US imperialists. The CIA in 1983 played a role in setting up the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), financed by the US Congress. The CIA and the government of ex-CIA Director George Bush work through NED to set up parties based particularly on petty bourgeois and intellectual forces in the socialist countries, as well as such

places as Nicaragua. NED is taking part in the so-called free elections in the socialist countries and took part in elections in Nicaragua where it backed the United Nicaraguan Opposition.

Capitalist talk about pluralism is designed to hide the truth about the class struggle and to cover counter-revolutionary work.

Of course, this critique of pluralism does not mean that besides the communist party exercising its leading role no other parties can exist under socialism. Parties expressing the interests of allied classes and strata in the building of socialism can and do exist. However, it is obvious that as the process towards communism continues, the number of parties diminishes as the basis for such parties disappears. So the level of socialist democracy is estimated on the basis of less parties, not more.

The level of socialist democracy is also estimated on the basis of involvement of the masses, led by the working class and its communist organisation, in the affairs of society, in the course of building communism.

Associated with the question of pluralism is the matter of freedom of the press. The bourgeoisie is a great advocate of freedom of the press. But so are some who speak in the name of Leninism. What did Lenin say about this matter?

Lenin replied to G Myasnikov in August 1921 when Myasnikov urged freedom of the press for everyone "from monarchists to the anarchists inclusively". Myasnikov said "outrages and abuses are rife in this country; freedom of the press will expose them".

Lenin said: "Freedom of the press, from the monarchists to the anarchists, inclusively ... I beg to differ: every Marxist and every worker who ponders over the four years experience of our revolution will say, 'Let's look into this — what sort of freedom of the press? What for? For which class?'

"We do not believe in 'absolutes'. We laugh at 'pure democracy' ...

"All over the world, wherever there are capitalists, freedom of the press means freedom to buy up newspapers, to buy writers, to bribe, buy and fake 'public opinion' for the benefit of the bourgeoisie.

"This is a fact.

"No one will ever be able to refute it.

"And what about us?

"Can anyone deny that the bourgeoisie in this country has been defeated, but not destroyed? That it has gone into hiding? Nobody can deny it."

Lenin went on to point out that "freedom of the press" opened the way for "political organisation for the bourgeoisie and its most loyal servant."

Lenin said:

"Freedom of the press will not help to purge the Communist Party in Russia of a number of its weaknesses, mistakes, misfortunes and maladies (it cannot

be denied that there is a spate of these maladies) because this is not what the world bourgeoisie wants. But freedom of the press will be a weapon in the hands of this world bourgeoisie. It is not dead; it is alive. It is lurking nearby and watching." (15)

The point is that it is true that the world bourgeoisie is still alive, still "lurking nearby and watching". Indeed it has even more sophisticated weapons at its disposal now because of the technological age we live in. Particularly relevant here are the vehicles for mass persuasion. The world bourgeoisie has also gained in experience.

Lenin's words hold true today. Living evidence of this truth is the crude anti-communism coming out now, particularly from the Soviet press which is now supposed to be free, and the support the world bourgeoisie is giving to this new freedom.

Of course, these arguments about freedom of the press apply to all the mass media.

Working class power and socialist democracy must cater for the expression of genuine needs and criticisms and this includes use of the mass media. But this requirement is not served by providing facilities for those who would destroy socialism.

There is an argument which goes as follows: under socialism we should allow freedom of the mass media and, indeed, freedom to organise for anti-socialist forces as long as these forces do not resort to armed action to overthrow the socialist system. If they take such armed action, then we can deal with them.

This is an underestimation of the role of propaganda and organisation in developing counter-revolution. Indeed, life has shown that a counter-revolutionary movement can develop without resort to arms, at least for a period. Waiting for armed action amounts to a desertion of the struggle against counter-revolution.

This contribution has concentrated on problems of power and democracy as they concern socialism. This is justified because these matters have occupied the attention of communists in the socialist and capitalist world and they deserve a lot of detailed attention. They are matters which significantly affect the theory and practice of communism.

Another point concerning socialism needs to be made. There were three propositions associated with the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which were of great importance and were sound, in the Socialist Party of Australia's view.

The first proposition concerned the leading role of the party and the need to lift the ideological work of the party. The second referred to greater use of the scientific and technological revolution in developing the socialist economy. The third dealt with the need for expansion of socialist democracy.

In examining the process of building communism, it has been necessary to be mindful of the key role of ideology and the responsibilities of the com-

munist party, the need for building the technical base of communist society and the requirement of developing socialist democracy. Thus the three propositions were directly related to the building of communist society.

However, along with these healthy propositions there were those which downgraded the role of the party, urged the adoption of a capitalist economy and advocated a replacement of socialist democracy with bourgeois democracy in the guise of "pure" democracy. These propositions were clearly of a revisionist nature and opened the way for a return to capitalism.

The revisionist trend threatens the healthy propositions outlined above. Indeed the revisionist trend threatens socialism itself.

This paper has concentrated on socialism but the question of power and democracy under capitalism is also a vital matter for communists.

Perhaps communists in the capitalist countries understand power and democracy under capitalism better than power and democracy under socialism. It seems certain that communists in the capitalist countries understand power and democracy under capitalism better than some who hold themselves out to be communists in the socialist countries.

It may not be necessary to point out the class character of capitalism, that capitalist class power is served by capitalist democracy; that in a country like ours, the real levers of power are held by monopoly capitalists; that our democratic rights are limited and they had to be won in struggle; and that even the widest practice of bourgeois democracy would not really challenge the power of the monopoly capitalists.

However, what is worth our attention is the importance of the struggle for democracy under state monopoly capitalism even though such democracy has certain limitations imposed by bourgeois democratic concepts.

Our task, as communists, is to link up the democratic struggle directed against monopoly with the wider democratic struggle directed against capitalism itself, in fact to replace bourgeois with proletarian democracy, to replace capitalist power with working class power. This change is needed in order to build a socialist society.

1. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 31, p 392.
2. *Ibid*, Vol 29, p 422.
3. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, International Bookshop, p 67.
4. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p 420.
5. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol 10, p 157. *From Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*.
6. *Ibid*, p 156.
7. *Ibid*, p 84.
8. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, International Bookshop, p 68.
9. Adam Lopatka, *Renewal through Democratisation in World Marxist Review*, December 1988, p 50.
10. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 32, p 199.
11. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, International Bookshop, p 28.
12. Lenin, *CPSU on the Work of the Soviets*, Moscow, 1979, p 223 (in Russian).
13. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p 183.

14. Ibid, Vol 8, p 477.

15. Quotations from Lenin regarding freedom of the press from *New Times*, No 40, pp 2 and 3. Full statement in *Collected Works*, Vol 32, pp 504-509.

Industrial Concentration and the Impact of Changed Conditions

by

The following article by Sam Webb was originally published in the March 1989 issue of *Political Affairs*, the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of the United States

Periodic reviews of our concentration policy and work are commonplace in our Party's history. Perhaps the most memorable review in our 70 year history was the conference in 1933. Prompting it, and conferences since then, were two inter-related factors. One was shortcomings in our work. The other was a new objective situation, compelling us to take a fresh look at our work and adapt it to the new conditions.

Such is the case today. On the one hand, we have moved away from concentration work and lost sight, to some degree, of the working class and mass production workers in particular. On the other hand, dramatic changes in living standards, workplace conditions, job prospects, level of unionisation, political consciousness and profile of the working class have occurred in the last decade.

Furthermore, these changes have not fully run their course. More changes can be expected as cyclical swings in the economy interact with longer term processes, such as the scientific and technological revolution, the militarisation and internationalisation of economic life, the growing role of the state on the side of the transnational corporations and other new global realities.

As a revolutionary working class Party, we need to study these new developments more deeply, make well-grounded assessments, and draw appropriate strategic and tactical conclusions. If we don't, we will end up tailing developments and our influence will decline rather than grow among workers.

Most significant for our Party, of all the new developments, are the new currents and trends in the labor movement. Without these, the prospects for resolving the new problems confronting the working class and people would be impossible.

Five years ago we projected the concept of "fresh winds", indicating a shift in labour towards class-struggle trade unionism, political independence, international solidarity and peace. At the time we said that the "fresh winds" reached into the leadership structure of the trade union movement, while we emphasised that they were stronger and steadier at the grassroots rank-and-file level.

In 1987, at our national convention, we updated our assessment. The main report to the convention stated:

"The fresh winds, that our trade union program correctly forecast, continue to blow. As with all winds, there are times when the gusts are up to 60 miles per hour, and there are moments when one has to wet one's finger and hold it in the air to determine whether the wind is still blowing.

"What is new is that the gusts are stronger and come more often and that the winds do not reverse themselves. What is called for as the main tactical approach is the organisation and mobilisation of the united working class. Thought patterns have changed so that the appeal on most questions can be made to the whole class, to all members of the trade union movement.

"Hence the concept of the united working class front... And, an integral part of this united class is a left sector that has grown and is still growing."

In retrospect, we can say with confidence that these estimates and tactical projections were sound. And, more importantly, they helped to stimulate broad initiatives and action in the working class movement by Party and left forces.

Of course not everyone in our Party and the left saw it this way. Instead of fresh winds, some only saw the stale winds of class collaboration, the labour movement in retreat, and the unchallengable might of monopoly power.

Then there were others who saw the fresh winds, but in a rigid, schematic way. When life and the labour movement didn't fit their schemes, they quickly adopted a "See, I told you so" posture and became armchair experts, lending their advice on what the labour movement ought to be doing.

The fact is that, even under the best of circumstances, the fresh winds and new currents in labour will develop unevenly. There will be setbacks and defeats. There will be some wrong positions and policies on specific questions. There will be retreats. But it can't be any other way. This is capitalism. And the labour movement is bucking a brutal-exploitative class that for the

past eight years has had the full support of the most racist, anti-labour administration in modern history.

What is really remarkable is that the labour movement has done what it has done in the face of this many-sided offensive against it.

Perhaps the best illustration is the 1988 election campaign. The labour movement as a whole was neck-deep in every phase of the campaign to defeat Bush and other Republican candidates. Union members helped to register voters, union publications clarified the issues, Labor Day actions brought more than a million workers and their allies into the streets, phone banks were set up, the political action committees spent millions, and nearly a million unionists volunteered to get out the vote on election day.

Never before has there been such a massive effort by the labour movement.

A special role in this wide range of activities was played by the left forces who, in addition to participating in the above activities, were instrumental in bringing the campaign of the Reverend Jesse Jackson to workers across the country. Though it's been said before, the response to the Jackson candidacy and program reveals, in a graphic way, precisely what we have been saying with regard to the scope, depth, and advanced character of wide sections of the working class and trade union movement.

Of course, there have been setbacks and new problems have emerged, requiring careful and thoughtful examination. The 1988 election, for example, was a high point in labour's struggles and labour has much to be proud of.

Yet the election results show that the labour vote by itself is not enough to turn the tide in a national presidential election nor in many local elections, for that matter. This brings to the fore questions about labour's relationship and outreach to other social forces and its own internal unity.

Today, slightly over 17 per cent of workers are members of unions, a two per cent decline since the beginning of the 80s. Most of the decline is the result of job losses in basic industry rather than the success of decertification campaigns.

Nevertheless, the decline in union members is no less of a problem. Moreover, many of the industries that are showing a drop in membership in the unionised sector also are showing an increase in the non-unionised sector.

On the service side of the economy, the organising efforts have been more successful, particularly in the public sector. According to recent statistics, 36.4 percent of federal, state, and city workers are unionists. Despite these successes, the implications of this overall decline in union membership are serious from the standpoint of the struggle for economic rights and democracy in general.

Thus a key task before the organised sector of the trade union movement and democratic-minded people is to significantly enlarge the number of workers who are in unions. Such a struggle will improve the election prospects of the people's movement.

It will also strengthen the struggle in the collective bargaining arena and weaken racism considerably.

As to labour's relationship and outreach to its allies, considerable progress has been made, as evidenced by the joint struggles that took shape to project issues, register voters, get out the vote, and so forth, in the recent election. But this needs to be built on in the period ahead.

Labor PACs, as well as other labour political action forms, can play a key role in this regard. But they need to be more action-oriented, coalition-minded, concerned with legislative issues as well as election results, based on the rank and file, and ready to run their own candidates.

Steps in this direction would dramatically improve labour's muscle in the political action, legislative arena. This is absolutely necessary. The reality is that many of the new problems confronting the labour and working class movement cannot be solved in a fundamental way at the collective bargaining table. A higher level of independent political action is needed.

Just imagine what the impact would be if there was a labour caucus in Congress closely working with the Congressional Black Caucus.

Another problem facing organised workers is the decline in strikes and strike activity. At first glance, it might seem to contradict our views about the growing and more militant currents in labour.

Upon deeper examination, though, we find that a new level of monopolisation, the growth of transnational corporations and the open interference of the state in collective bargaining has created some new difficulties in contractual negotiations, even on the upside of the business cycle.

And if you combine that with fragmented bargaining structures and the common use of scabs to break strikes, then we get a clearer picture of complex tactical problems that even the most militant union faces at the negotiating table and on the picket line.

This new situation is stimulating a debate within labour's ranks regarding its bargaining and strike strategy. Its eventual resolution will have as profound an impact on the class struggle as did the debate and struggle, six decades ago, over craft versus industrial unionism.

As we know, the Party and the left played a major role in advancing concepts of organisation and program, corresponding to the new requirements of the class struggle during that period. In the decade of the 90s, we can and must play a similar role.

This year a number of major negotiations are scheduled. We will support each while making special efforts to back the steelworkers in their negotiations. Involved are 60,000 workers and the key task is to widen the front of struggle along class struggle lines. A major responsibility for our Party's work in these negotiations falls on the Labor Commission, the *People's Daily World*, and the districts from Pennsylvania to Missouri.

The mounting difficulties of African-American workers in basic industry and

throughout the economy is still another problem confronting labour. In the current decade the, status of Black workers has worsened, jeopardising earlier gains and the unity between Black and white.

Many who were laid off in the deepest part of the economic crisis in 1981-1982 have not been recalled. Of these, many have got new jobs that pay an average of \$10,000 less than their previous annual earnings. Many work part-time with little protection and no benefits. A substantial number have dropped out of the workforce and have become homeless and hungry.

Meanwhile, the sons and daughters of these workers are portrayed by bourgeois apologists as a so-called "ghetto underclass".

Those workers lucky enough to get recalled often find themselves on new jobs — paying less, requiring less skill, and physically exhausting. In the auto industry, for example, many recalled African-American workers formerly assigned to paint, spot welding, and inspection are now in assembly. Higher seniority workers or robots are in their old jobs.

Thus the restructuring process, the relocation of industry outside of traditional working class and African-American centres, and the application of new technology to the production process is bringing about a new racist division of labour.

While these interrelated processes adversely affect the working class as a whole, they also increase the inequality within the class and explain, in large measure, the growing differential in living standards between Black and white.

Similar difficulties are experienced by other nationally oppressed and women workers. Aggravating this situation is the continuing assault of the courts on affirmative action. It is designed to erode overnight what was won through bitter struggle over decades and to split our increasingly multi-racial, multi-national working class.

Thus the struggle for affirmative action in the workplace is critical to eliminating inequality and solidifying class unity. It is also the foundation of labour/African-American unity.

At the same time, special measures to increase the minimum wage, extend and increase unemployment benefits, shorten the working week, rebuild the nation's infrastructure and end the health, housing, education, and other gaps between Black and white is another cornerstone of the struggle for equality, class and labour/African-American unity, and social progress.

Immediately, an all-out fight is needed by labour to challenge the Supreme Court's recent undermining of affirmative action and compel Congress to enact legislation guaranteeing economic, political, and social equality.

One final problem that I want to mention is the conspiracy to blunt the new trends in the trade union movement. Involved are the ruling class, the FBI, and Lane Kirkland and his right, social-democratic counterparts.

They are investing big money, time, and personnel to remove left and prog-

ressive union leaders from their positions. Like Nixon in the 70s, they have a "hit list". To get on it, all a union leader has to do is challenge the AFL-CIO support for imperialism's foreign policies or act "confrontational" at the bargaining table.

At the same time, they are grooming their own candidates for election. Unfortunately, they have had some success. We need to alert the progressive union leaders about this co-ordinated attack. It calls for vigilance and common sense. Above all, it calls for strengthening the Party and left at the rank and file level and drawing the rank and file into this struggle where necessary.

These new problems offer the labour movement new challenges. They require new answers and fresh approaches. Without attempting to answer this in full, I would like to make some general remarks as a background for the discussion.

First, the setbacks and new difficulties should be seen within the context of the positive shifts in the labour and working class movement. To take them out of that context is not only wrong but has the unintended effect of demobilising the Party and the left in labour and the broader movements.

Secondly, the setbacks experienced by labour were not for lack of militancy. QWL programs in the auto industry, for example, were not greeted with open arms by the workers but imposed upon many locals under the threat of plant-closing or major lay-offs.

Thirdly, the fight for wider forms of unity is paramount in combating class collaboration as well as the corporate offensive. Changing thought patterns, a growing left sector, and deeper and wider sentiment for unity do not automatically translate into organisation.

That requires forms of action and organisation. With such forms, it is possible for the left in labour to become the dominant trend, with such forms it is possible to deepen and extend class and all people's unity. With such forms, it is possible to move from a defensive posture to an offensive one. With such forms it is possible to project new, radical answers to today's problems.

Because of the fresh winds and broad currents, the forms should be flexible and broad enough to encompass all those who agree on one or another issue. Certainly, the forms which materialise in the budget struggles can easily embrace wide sections of the trade union movement membership and leadership.

In today's situation, we don't always have to invent forms any more than we have to invent the class struggle. Sometimes they are right before our eyes and the doors are open, but we hold back and others fill the vacuum.

Jobs with Justice, Labor Rainbow, New Directions, Central Labor Bodies, local unions are some forms that come to mind. In each case, these forms have been instrumental in mobilising labour, in uniting our multi-racial, multi-national, male-female working class, in bringing advanced positions into the labour movement, and in working with labour's allies.

At the same time, new forms of left, left-centre, and united working class

unity will also inevitably emerge as the labour movement searches for ways to cope with today's difficulties and the scope of capital's reach. They are sorely needed in the collective bargaining arena where the rank and file have to contend with new forms of class collaboration coming from the headquarters of a number of international unions as well as the corporate offensive.

While propaganda and agitation exposing the nature of class collaboration — who benefits from it, its impact and, above all, alternatives to it — are necessary, there is no substitute for action forms that organise the rank and file and its leaders to fight the corporations. In such struggles workers will see, with greater clarity, the nature of monopoly and what it takes to beat it. They will also separate the good leaders from the bad.

Industrial concentration is by no means a new policy. It is time tested and proven. It is a policy for all seasons. Nothing in today's world or the world of tomorrow suggests that it should be replaced by something "new". It is the main way that we deepen and extend our ties in the working class movement, get to know its mood and readiness for action, influence its thinking and help prepare it to meet the specific challenges of the last decade of the 20th century.

It is the main way to build our Party and press among the working class and its key sectors.

Following the pre-convention conference on industrial concentration in Cleveland in 1983, there was a noticeable improvement in our concentration policy and work. Shop papers mushroomed. The circulation of the paper increased substantially. Some community clubs selected plants to focus on and registered significant successes. Discussion groups, geared to attracting workers, were organised in a number of districts. Mailing lists were drawn up with workers in mind. And so forth.

But we were not able to sustain these activities in many cases. At first glance, we would probably say that we ran headlong into the 1984 elections, compelling a re-orientation of our work.

And there is no question that our election activities caused us to make some shifts in the development of our cadre, but it doesn't explain why the Party (as a whole) drew away from our concentration work and policy because of the election. If it did, then the slide would have ended shortly after Election Day. But it did not.

The distribution of the paper has fallen off further, particularly in some key concentration districts. The same can be said about shop papers.

Another aspect of the slide has been our slow growth in the mass production industries. We have grown more in other sectors of the workforce.

Some districts and clubs have fared better than others. There have been some pluses. Our contacts and connections in the trade union movement have increased. The distribution of the (People's Daily World) in working class communities has improved in some districts. Where we have stuck with our shop-papers, workers have responded favourably. In St. Louis, for example,

the shop paper has had a significant impact on the thinking of workers and has influenced a number of struggles and heightened the prestige of the Party. We have also recruited trade unionists.

To give a few examples:

- ★ The New York District organised several hospital clubs following a successful struggle from which many new recruits joined the Party.
- ★ The Northern California district brought nearly 50 unionists to recruiting meetings during the summer Party building drive.
- ★ A community club in Rochester New York recruited three auto workers from a shop where it passed out the (People's Daily World).

Thus we have made some progress, but it's been uneven and we cannot be satisfied. Indeed, I would argue that the same contradiction remains that Comrade Hall spoke about at the Cleveland conference, six years ago. He said:

“At the very moment when our working class is faced with a series of economic and social crises sharpened by the Reagan- corporate offensive, by the increase in racism, the high number of permanently unemployed, continuing cutbacks, forced concessions and plant closings -- at this very moment when our working class ... faces all of these crises, our Party's efforts and attention to industrial concentration actually diminished.

“Nationally, and in many districts, industrial concentration is not a top priority or a focal point of our work. The one exception to this trend continues to be the increase in the distribution of the (Daily World) in shops and working class areas.

“For us to re-establish and revitalise our policy of industrial concentration, we must examine this contradictory development.”]

And now most importantly, we must resolve this stubborn contradiction. In this spirit I would like to outline some of the thinking expressed in the National Board discussion.

As in the past, ideological weaknesses revolving around the leading role of the working class and its decisive sectors in mass production industries persist. In fact, they have grown because of changes in the objective situation.

The scientific-technological revolution and the structural crisis have brought about the growth of new sectors of the working class and a decline in employment levels in the mass production industries.

Some have wrongly interpreted this change in the composition of the workforce and drop in the level of unionisation as the basis for shifting the Party's attention away from industrial concentration.

But the reality is that few of the industries which make up the traditional base of the nation's economy will be departing from the economic scene in the foreseeable future. During this decade, they have been restructured, can now claim a high level of productive technique, a significant share of the world market in their product line, and a smaller, but sizable workforce.

Admittedly the employment levels are not at their previous peak in 1979, but the callback has been significant in a number, if not all, of the basic industries nonetheless. Moreover, it appears that the structural crisis in some of these industries has moderated.

Of course, a cyclical downswing might change the picture rapidly. In the last cyclical crisis, the monopolies exploited the downturn to rapidly drive down wages, increase productivity, and restructure basic industry.

For now and the foreseeable future though, we want to argue against drawing any one-sided or exaggerated conclusions regarding the disappearance of the traditional basic industries and the workers employed in them.

At the same time, we want to broaden our concentration focus to include the new mass production industries, like hi-tech. This shift was first proposed in Comrade Hall's report to the NC meeting in 1985 and reaffirmed at the 1987 convention in Chicago.

We also said then that state organisations should examine the new mix of industry in their area of responsibility and we warned against any counterposing of the newer against the older industries. That was a sound position and we believe it is equally sound now.

From a theoretical standpoint, our policy and priorities rest on the fact that mass production workers are the main productive force in society. They are the creators of surplus value and the source of enormous profits. Without them the wheels of industry would not run.

Even when workers become the "regulators of production", as Marx said, they will remain the main productive force but also the main revolutionary force because of the special place that they occupy in the system of capitalist exploitation. Not only do they produce values and profits, but they are also concentrated in large factories, confront monopoly daily, and understand the need for unity and mass action.

Moreover, in the context of our country these workers have long union traditions and experience in the class struggle. They will play a special role in the immediate struggles against the Bush Administration and over the longer haul. To say it differently:

["Only the proletariat -- by virtue of the economic role it plays in large scale production -- is capable of being the leader of all the working people, whom the bourgeoisie exploit, oppresses and crush, often not less but more than they do the proletarians but who are incapable of waging an independent struggle for their emancipation."]

That was Lenin and though it was written several decades ago, the core idea retains its validity.

Now some comrades may legitimately ask: "What about the workers in the service sector of the economy? Aren't they now the largest component of the working class and shouldn't they be the main focal point of our work?"

The answer is yes -- they are the largest sector, but no -- they should not be

the main focal point of our work. Numerical size is not the decisive determinant of our concentration focus. Place in the overall system of social production and the consciousness arising therefrom are.

This doesn't mean that we ignore service workers or downgrade their role in class and people's struggles. That is considerable and growing.

In fact, it can be argued with some truth that we give more attention to the service workers in some districts than to the task of rebuilding the Party in the mass production industries. And in most cases it is not a conscious decision that the national or district leadership make. The simple fact is that we have far more comrades in that end of the trade union movement than we do in the mass production end.

All this presents difficulties, but not insurmountable ones. The changing conditions of the working class and its profile call for some adjustments, but not a fundamental revision of the Leninist policy of industrial concentration.

Another problem impeding our orientation to mass production workers and workers in general is the view that workers are unintellectual and unworldly. While we may have a progressive view of the working class as an abstraction, the view of some comrades towards individual workers is still somewhat prejudiced.

Too often it is assumed that workers are not interested in ideas and issues that go beyond the workplace or the sports page.

Today though such views are especially out-dated. Changing conditions of the economy, the growing interdependence of the world in which we live, and the new global dangers threatening humankind have extended the horizons of workers as wide as those of any other class or strata.

At the same time, almost two-thirds of the US people have a favourable opinion of unions and most are concerned about the economy. This overlapping of concerns and interests is the basis for broad mass unity and a heightened role of the working class and its decisive sectors in the people's struggles.

Realising the full potential of this new situation will take a more consistent struggle to make industrial concentration a method and style of work of all Communists, regardless of what movement they are in and every club regardless of whether it is focussed on a workplace or neighbourhood.

Now industrial concentration tends to be the property of our trade unionists and those who pass the (People's Daily World) out at the shop gate. Drawing the rest of the Party -- leadership at all levels and community clubs -- into this work and fighting for a new style are key tasks.

And we have to collectively find the best ways to interlink the broader concerns of workers and the people through economic issues, like unemployment, poverty, homelessness, hunger, housing, wages, etc.

Though there has been some improvement in economic conditions in recent years, the economic situation of millions of working people is insecure at best because of the uneven and lopsided character of the recovery and the

unrelenting nature of the state monopoly-corporate offensive. Consequently, these issues remain a key link to influencing wide sections of the working class and its key sectors.

Another barrier to consistent concentration is the expectation of quick and identifiable results. But the working class and particularly those in the basic sectors don't always respond like other sectors of the population. Because they have fewer options they take their time in judging whether something is for real or not. When they fight, they want to have some hope of winning.

But we don't always take this into account. Consequently many good initiatives, particularly shop gate distributions, fall by the wayside because of this line of thinking.

Still another factor impeding our concentration work is that the struggle for unity is not always an integral feature of our concentration work. Our working class is a single entity sharing common interests and molded by a single system of exploitation. Yet the working class, as we also know, is also composed of different sectors, each with its own specific interests and needs.

Aware of this, the ruling class strives ceaselessly to disrupt this unity, to pit one sector against another -- white collar against blue collar, intellectuals against manual workers, men against women, skilled against unskilled, older against younger, private against public sector, and US born against foreign born workers.

Most fundamental is the pitting of the interests of white against Black workers. From monopoly's standpoint, class divisions along these lines are a strategic requirement for its economic and political rule in the short as well as the longer term.

Conversely, the struggle against racism and for equality is a prerequisite not only for class and labour African American unity, but also for the achievement of major advances for the entire working class and people.

It is also a prerequisite for building the Party among all segments of our class.

For these reasons, the struggle for equality and Black- white unity should be at the heart of our concentration policy.

Today, though the ruling class has intensified its efforts to disunite our class, the possibilities for unity are probably greater than ever before. But it will take a struggle.

Hampering our efforts are some false notions which to one degree or another have penetrated labour's ranks and our ranks as well. One is that equality has, by and large, been achieved. Another is that the present scope and intensity of the economic crisis preclude any special measures to achieve equality for those sections of the working class who are most severely affected. This "we are all in the same boat" attitude is peddled by social-democrats of different stripes.

Even the notion that Black-white unity is no longer an indispensable

requirement of social progress has seeped into the thinking of some left forces.

Thus the fight for our concentration policy calls for a critical review of our work and a well thought out and planned ideological tune-up as well as more concrete initiatives and struggle in the fight against racism and for equality and Black-white unity.

Another factor hindering consistent concentration work is cadre deployment problems which sometimes interfere with the best initiatives. If we are going to pursue a concentration policy, we have to deploy our cadre to carry out the key concentration tasks even as we involve the whole party in concentration policy. Without our cadre, we can't put out shop papers, leaflets, etc.

A final factor slowing down our concentration work is understanding properly the role of clubs in the workplace. Comrade Winston said that they are the "essence of concentration".

What Winnie meant, I believe, is that a shop club is better able to get to know and consistently be in touch with a specific group of workers in a plant, industry, school, hospital, or institution. It's better able to gain a deeper knowledge of the workers' problems. It's better able to influence, extend, and deepen the growing left sector and the united working class front. It's better able to inject the "plus". And it's better able to recruit and consolidate new recruits into the Party.

Experience bears this out, not universally, but in many instances. A club in steel, for example, not too long ago played a major role in a struggle against racist violence. Because of its initiative, the union with the African-American community were able to pull together many other forces to respond to this attack.

Probably no other type of club could have done that as quickly and with the same amount of breadth and success.

What are some of the things we have to do to strengthen our concentration work? First, we have to improve our ideological and educational work. We have to win the Party at all levels to our concentration policy and to understand better its content, different dimensions, and its essence.

Furthermore it's an ongoing task. One conference or one discussion, no matter how good, is not adequate. The challenges to the leading role of the working class are constant and greater today. They come from various and sometimes surprising sources.

So we must meet the challenge on today's ground. It can't be done by standing pat or with general declarations. While they may be true, they will probably not be convincing to some in our Party nor to those outside our ranks.

We need, therefore, to examine both the status and content of our educational and ideological work in this area in view of the new objective situation and its challenges.

A second task is to examine the changing structure of the working class and our relationship to mass production industries in our area. At the conclusion of the examination, we should be in a position, among other things, to select concentration shops and working class communities.

A third task is to review the content and headlines of the [People's Daily World] and the status of its distribution, particularly at shop gates and in workplaces. The setting of specific goals, selection of distribution sites, and the establishment of regular distribution teams are necessary if we are to make headway in this area.

A fourth task is to examine the status of Party shop papers. In many cases, the discussion will revolve around the possibilities of starting one up or resuming one that has been in hibernation. We hope to be a little more helpful here with material for inclusion in Party shop papers or separate distribution.

A fifth task is to look closely at the status of our workplace clubs. As we know from experience, forming one is hard, but also maintaining them as vital centres of Party life is no simple job either. It takes the collective attention of the Party at the district level in the first place.

A sixth task is to work out an approach to building the Party among mass production workers. We know that it's not easy. We also know that it won't happen spontaneously. It requires involvement in day to day struggles, the Communist plus, a combination of forms, a special approach to reach the racially and nationally oppressed in these industries and initiatives to enhance the legality of our Party in a political sense.

The final task is to work out a plan that includes a realistic timetable and cadre assignments. If anything needs planning and, equally important, check-up and review, it's this decisive area of work.

Building the Party in the Workplace

by Steve Gibson
Central Committee member
Socialist Party of Australia

"The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement." (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*)

It goes without saying that the Socialist Party of Australia's position is one of agreement with the foregoing statement. Much of our Party's time and resources in the period of its existence have been devoted to building its influence at the workplace.

Our Party Program has this to say about the working class:

"It is the historic mission of the working class to come to the head of society. In liberating itself it also liberates all other classes and social groups exploited by big capital. The working class does not seek to subjugate any other class for the purpose of exploitation. The working class ends, once and for all, the whole system of exploitation and replaces it with real social unity and ultimately welds the nation into a classless society in which each has a common interest in the well being of all."

A noble goal indeed! Who is to bring about this marvellous state of affairs? The working class, in order to fulfil its historical mission, needs first of all to know about it and then to be encouraged to take the steps necessary to advance along the path charted for it according to our understanding of the historical processes referred to in that section of the SPA Program.

The answer, of course, is that the communist party also has a role. That role is to assume a leadership position within the working class for purposes of ensuring that the tasks confronting the workers are adequately met and dealt with.

History, being the great teacher we know it to be, convinces us that it is all very well to proclaim the leading role of the working class and that of the Party, but to establish and maintain and consolidate those roles requires more than proclamation.

Our Party has given much thought to these questions and concluded that a priority task must be to build the Party in the workplace. Numerous declarations to that effect have been made, while strategies and tactics have perhaps not always been given the attention necessary to ensure the words are translated into deeds.

Ideally, our Party would have membership and influence in all industries, all trade unions and all working class community structures. The reality is that our cadre force and resources are severely limited commensurate with our comparative numerical weakness. Consequently the task of workplace Party building becomes very much a matter of resource allocation according to priorities.

The first decision which needs to be given effect to is that the task of workplace Party building is a Party task, not simply one for those comrades who work in industry. Naturally a Party comrade actually on the shop floor can be expected to have a good understanding of the particular issues of direct interest to the workforce.

The fact remains, however, that the issues most likely to affect those workers are those which have general application and this is where Party-produced leaflets dealing with matters of universal concern can supplement specific job bulletins. Alternatively, job bulletins can combine local issues with topics of a general character.

Distribution can best be handled by the comrades working in the enterprise, because the workers are then dealing with 'one of their own' rather than a face at the gate, no matter how familiar.

Therefore, I believe, our priority number one needs to be those workplaces where we are directly represented.

It is an unfortunate fact, but a fact nonetheless, that for every workplace where our Party is represented on the shop floor, there are a number where it is not. Our Party speaks of the need to build Party organisation, particularly in the large factories. The advantages of doing so are obvious and this should be our objective.

Locality Branches, guided by the State and/or District Committees, need to carefully select enterprises having regard to the size, ease of access, ethnic mix of workforce (leaflet language), shift times and, most importantly, the ability to service the place on a clockwork regular basis. It is probably a better proposition to visit a smaller enterprise every Thursday without fail than to pay a periodic visit to a larger factory.

Another aspect of Party building in the workplace is related more to building respect for and understanding of our Party than it is to all out recruiting. Naturally the two functions cannot be artificially separated because the latter is

improbable without the former.

The establishment of rank and file groupings has assumed additional urgency in this era of highly centralised trade union authority. Not only are the workers on the job suffering a lack of input opportunity and participation in decision making, but the same can be said for their directly elected representatives.

More and more, the functions which should rest with industry union officials are being taken over by a sophisticated centralised ACTU apparatus. The fact that the admitted priority of the ACTU leadership is the retention of the Labor Government illustrates quite clearly the dangers to working conditions and comparative living standards which have existed for some time and are becoming more menacing.

The answer favoured by conservative forces is "enterprise bargaining" but, of course, this is not our position. In order to combat such reactionary ideas which, if not properly dealt with, can have some attraction for some workers, rank and file groups are a necessity. Party comrades are well placed to provide a proper and correct influence within such groups resulting in a broader dissemination of our views than would otherwise be the case.

Complementing the work of comrades in the workplace and comrades assisting directly by leaflet distribution, Guardian sales and the like, is the involvement of other comrades in community organisations. Peace groups, housing tenants associations, environmental and welfare committees and a host of community based movements have workers and their families amongst their membership. The showing of the Party face in such areas accompanied by a positive, consistent involvement will have a beneficial flow-on effect to the workplace in addition to the direct benefits to be derived from such work in the Party's name.

Therefore it can be seen that opportunity exists for an all round Party involvement in workplace concentration providing each member with the opportunity to be a part of this task allocated such a high priority by the Party leadership.

Before we can afford ourselves the "luxury" of pinpointing this or that "high technology" or mass production enterprise as our target for concentrating maximum effort, it seems to me that we have to "tailor our clothes according to our cloth".

Workplace Party building is a huge task for us, as well as a priority task. It requires persistent, painstaking work and attention to detail. Our Party believes it to be a vital element in the overall task of building our Party's size and influence.

Nobody else is going to do the job for us.

Fraternal Parties comment on Eastern Europe and the international communist movement

The following statements are extracts from resolutions and articles dealing with developments in Eastern Europe published by a number of Communist Parties.

The Crisis in the Socialist World

This commentary was published in the Editorial Notes in *The African Communist*, journal of the South African Communist Party, No 121, second quarter 1990

The seriousness of the crisis which has overtaken the international communist movement cannot be overstated. The collapse of the communist-dominated governments of Eastern Europe, the gathering complications frustrating the implementation of the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, the Tienanmen Square massacre in Beijing last June, the formal abandonment of many of the policies of Marxism-Leninism by a number of communist parties — all these factors have greatly altered the balance of forces in the world. In the immediate post-war period there was a “world socialist system” embracing more

than one-third of the world's population, ideologically united and constituting a powerful international force for peace and social progress. Today this system is in a state of disarray.

At its 7th Congress held in the first months of 1989, the South African Communist Party adopted a new program which outlined three main ways in which the socialist system contributed to the revolutionary process of transition from capitalism to communism. These were:

“First, the existence of socialist countries, their growing might, and their foreign policies, based on working class internationalism, have brought about gradual changes in the world-wide balance of forces between imperialism and all the forces opposing it. The growing might of the socialist countries restricts imperialism's ability to export counter-revolution.

“Secondly, the advances of the socialist countries inspire the working people throughout the world to struggle for social and national emancipation, raising the level of their demands and programs of action.

“Thirdly, socialist countries provide significant and many-sided support to revolutionary movements throughout the world.”

This was all true at the time, but in the months since then the picture has been transformed. Communist power in many countries has been broken by popular insurrection, and is being challenged by a variety of centrifugal forces even in the Soviet Union itself. What is the explanation for this astonishing turnabout in the international arena? Where will it all end? Let us consider briefly the three points from the SACP program.

Imperialism benefits

1. To the extent that the strength and will of the socialist forces have been eroded, imperialism is the undoubted beneficiary. The clearest proof of this was provided by the United States invasion of Panama and kidnapping of General Noriega — acts of lawless brigandage which were condemned by the United Nations and world opinion as a whole, but which have become accomplished if not universally accepted facts because they coincided with the Rumanian revolution on which the attention of the media became concentrated.

Ceausescu and his wife Elena were arraigned, convicted and executed for the crime of genocide which was alleged at the time to have cost the lives of 60,000 Rumanian citizens slaughtered by the securitate police force — a casualty figure scaled down to 689 by the time four members of Ceausescu's politburo were brought to trial at the end of January.

The United States forces slaughtered far more than that number of Panamanian citizens in the course of their invasion, yet Bush still presides at the White House in Washington and, far from being charged with genocide as he should be, is praised by the media of the capitalist world for having rescued Panama for “democracy”.

The most serious consequence of the communist collapse in Eastern Europe, however, is the erosion of the strength and unity of the forces of the

Warsaw Pact which was set up to counter the Western powers' creation of NATO after the Second World War. Soviet forces are today being pressured to withdraw from all of Eastern Europe while the US forces stay put.

Self-criticism to excess

2. If the achievements of the socialist countries have always been an inspiration to working people throughout the world to struggle for social and national emancipation, socialist crisis has the opposite, disheartening effect. The current sense of let-down is exacerbated by the apparent determination of communist parties in some socialist countries to belittle their real achievements and exaggerate their shortcomings in the hope of establishing their democratic credentials.

Solidarity effort

3. Let us again acknowledge the enormous and wide-ranging support which has been generously given by the socialist countries to revolutionary movements throughout the world in the finest spirit of proletarian internationalism, including *inter alia* a massive contribution by the GDR towards the printing and distribution of this journal.

The present turmoil in Europe cannot enhance the prospect of aid being advanced on the same scale as hitherto. The German Democratic Republic, for example, is only justified in existing as an independent entity to the extent that it is socialist. If the socialist forces are defeated, reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany is inevitable — and we all know that the FRG is a supporter of the De Klerk Government, not of the liberation movement headed by the ANC.

Nor was it only liberation movements that were the beneficiaries of solidarity aid from the socialist countries. The newly independent countries that were formerly colonies of the imperialist powers were given the most extensive and non-exploitative assistance by the socialist countries to enable them to stand on their own feet, including military aid where necessary to withstand the pressures of counter-revolution. In the absence of this support from the socialist countries, the third world will be much weakened in its struggle to fend off the grasping tentacles of the multinational corporations.

Botha in Hungary

The South African regime has been quick to sense an opportunity to profit from the communist debacle in Eastern Europe. Foreign Minister Pik Botha wangled an invitation from the Hungarian Government to visit Budapest and is seeking further openings. In an interview with the London *Independent* on January 24 he expressed satisfaction that the ANC had been dealt a body blow and declared that "never before have South Africa's chances of breaking out of its political isolation in Africa seemed better".

The African National Congress issued an angry statement denouncing the Hungarian invitation to Botha as an act of betrayal. An SACP statement issued on January 4 declared:

“The International Committee of the South African Communist Party condemns the decision of the Hungarian Government to invite the South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha to visit their country. At a time when the National Liberation Movement headed by the African National Congress and the Mass Democratic Movement are calling for an intensification of the boycott as a vital contribution towards their struggle to end apartheid, the action of the Hungarian Government can only be interpreted by the South African people as an encouragement to their enemy. We call upon the Hungarian Government to end all contact with the South African regime and revert to their previous honourable stance of total solidarity and support for the South African liberation struggle.”

Perhaps the South African liberation movement, together with progressive organisations in other countries, has taken the support of the socialist countries too much for granted in the past. But it is now clear that the extent of solidarity with our struggle displayed by these governments has been in direct proportion to the extent to which they were genuinely committed to the cause of socialism. Their solidarity effort was not the outcome of sentimentalism or opportunism but arose from their ideological understanding that the struggle for socialism and the struggle for national liberation were inextricably linked. Imperialism was a common enemy.

For any government today to promote trade, sporting or diplomatic links with South Africa is to betray the cause of national liberation.

Pik Botha himself appreciates very well that the decline and fall of communist governments in Eastern Europe has been to the benefit of the forces of racism and imperialism world-wide. In his interview with the *Independent*, Botha maintained that “the inevitable curtailment of East European aid to South Africa’s economically-dependent neighbours would leave these countries with no option but to improve relations with South Africa”. He envisaged the ultimate development of a South African version of the Marshall Plan which would place the apartheid regime in a position of dominance over all of southern Africa. “Economic strength could evolve into political strength, into alliances where there was once antagonism.”

In other words, Pik Botha acknowledges that the power and strength of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries was a major factor in curtailing South Africa’s imperialist ambitions in Africa. It is to be hoped that this admission will spread the understanding in all sections of our movement that it is in the fundamental interest of our own national liberation that the cause of socialism should be advanced, not only in Eastern Europe, but world-wide.

A socialist Britain, a socialist America, a socialist Germany and a socialist Japan could and would impose effective sanctions against South Africa which would bring down the apartheid regime overnight. The continuation in office of people like Bush, Thatcher, Kohl and company only delays the resolution of our conflict and perpetuates the suffering of our people.

Which still leaves open the question of what is socialism? And why did the governments of the socialist countries collapse? There is no easy answer to these questions, about which debate has raged ever since the campaigns for

perestroika and *glasnost* were launched in the Soviet Union, and about which controversy has intensified in the wake of the cataclysmic events of the last few months.

The South African Communist Party is not inclined to succumb to the imperialist ideological offensive seeking to establish that capitalism is superior to socialism, and that the cold war has been won by the West. As we stated in the last issue of *The African Communist*, we still believe that “no matter what happens to the existing socialist countries, capitalism has failed and will continue to fail to end class struggle and oppression and the fight for socialism will continue”.

The path to power

But what sort of socialism? And brought about by what methods? In our own South Africa, has our conception of the path to power been changed?

We believe that what is going on in the international communist movement today is not a process of demolition but of cleansing. The constitution of the SACP declares that its aim is to establish a socialist republic in South Africa based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, to promote the ideas of proletarian internationalism and the unity of the workers of South Africa and the world, and to participate in and strengthen the World Communist Movement.

Nothing that has happened in Eastern Europe or elsewhere makes us believe that this perspective needs to be altered.

Marxist theory under fire

Extracts from an *Umsebenzi*
discussion pamphlet, *Has socialism failed?* (1),
by Joe Slovo, General Secretary
South African Communist Party

Let us touch on some of the concepts which have come under fire in the post-perestroika polemics.

★ Marxism maintains that the class struggle is the motor of human history.(2) Some commentators in the socialist media are showing a temptation to jettison this theory merely because Stalin and the bureaucracy around him distorted it to rationalise tyrannical practices. **But it remains valid both as an explanation of past social transformations and as a guide to the strategy and tactics of the struggle to win a socialist order;** a struggle in which the working class plays the dominant role.

★ The economic stagnation of socialism and its poor technological performance as compared to the capitalist world sector cannot be attributed to the ineffectiveness of socialist relations of production but rather to their distortion. **Socialist relations of production provide the most effective framework for maximising humanity's productive capacity and using its products in the interests of the whole society.**

★ Marxist ethical doctrine sees no conflict between the contention that all morality is class-related and the assertion that working class values are concerned, above all, with the supremacy of human values.(3) The separation of these inter-dependent concepts (in later theory and practice) provided the context in which crimes against the people were rationalised in the name of the class. **We continue to assert that it is only in a non-exploitative, communist, classless society that human values will find their ultimate expression and be freed of all class-related morality. In the meanwhile the socialist transition has the potential of progressively asserting the values of the whole people over those of classes.**

★ The great divide which developed between socialism and political

democracy should not be treated as flowing naturally from key aspects of socialist doctrine. This approach is fuelled by the sullied human rights record and the barrack-room collectivism of some of the experiences of existing socialism. We believe that **Marxism clearly projects a system anchored in deep-seated political democracy and the rights of the individual which can only be truly attained when society as a whole assumes control and direction of all its riches and resources.**

★ The crucial connection between socialism and internationalism and the importance of world working class solidarity should not be underplayed as a result of the distortions which were experienced. These included excessive centralisation in the era of the Comintern, subordination of legitimate national aspirations to a distorted concept of 'internationalism', national rivalries between and within socialist states (including examples of armed confrontation). **Working class internationalism remains one of the most liberating concepts in Marxism and needs to find effective expression in the new world conditions.**

In summary, we believe that Marxism is a social science whose fundamental postulates and basic insights into the historical processes remain a powerful (because accurate) theoretical weapon. But this is not to say that every word of Marx, Engels and Lenin must be taken as gospel; they were not infallible and they were not always correct in their projections.

Lenin, for example, believed that capitalism was about to collapse worldwide in the post-October period.

It was a belief based on the incorrect premise that, as a system, capitalism had already reached the stage at which the capitalist relations of production constituted an obstacle to the further all-round development of the forces of production.

This was combined with a belief in the imminence of global socialist transformation, which undoubtedly infected much of the earlier thinking about the perspectives of socialist construction in the Soviet Union.

Also, it could well be argued that the classical description of bourgeois democracy (4) was an over-simplification and tended to underestimate the historic achievements of working class struggle in imposing and defending aspects of a real democratic culture on the capitalist state; a culture which should not disappear but rather needs to be expanded under true socialism.

But we emphasise again that the fundamental distortions which emerged in the practice of existing socialism cannot be traced to the essential tenets of Marxist revolutionary science.

If we are looking for culprits, we must look at ourselves and not at the founders of Marxism.

**The fault lies with us,
not with socialism**

In some cases, the deformations experienced by existing socialist states were the results of bureaucratic distortions which were rationalised at the

ideological level by a mechanical and out-of-content invocation of Marxist dogma. In other cases they were the results of a genuinely-motivated but tragic mis-application of social theory in new realities which were not foreseen by the founders of Marxism.

The fact that socialist power was first won in the most backward outpost of European capitalism, without a democratic political tradition, played no small part in the way it was shaped. To this must be added the years of isolation, economic siege and armed intervention which, in the immediate post-October period, led to the virtual decimation of the Soviet Union's relatively small working class. In the course of time the party leadership was transformed into a command post with an overbearing centralism and very little democracy, even in relation to its own membership.

Most of the other socialist countries emerged 30 years later in the shadow of the cold war. Some of them owed a great deal to Soviet power for their very creation and survival, and the majority, for a great part of their history, followed the Stalinist economic and political model. Communists outside the socialist world and revolutionaries engaged in anti-colonial movements were the beneficiaries of generous aid and consistent acts of internationalist solidarity. They correctly saw in Soviet power a bulwark against their enemies and either did not believe, or did not want to believe, the way in which aspects of socialism were being debased.

All this helps to explain, but in no way to justify, the awful grip which Stalinism came to exercise in every sector of the socialist world and over the whole international communist movement. It was a grip which, if loosened by either parties (e.g. Yugoslavia) or individuals within parties, usually led to isolation and excommunication.

We make no attempt here to answer the complex question of why so many millions of genuine socialists and revolutionaries became such blind worshippers in the temple of the cult of the personality. Suffice it to say that the strength of this conformism lay, partly, in an ideological conviction that those whom history had appointed as the custodians of humankind's communist future seemed to be building on foundations prepared by the founding fathers of Marxism. And there was not enough in classical Marxist theory about the nature of the transition period to provide a detailed guide to the future.

This under-developed state of classical Marxist theory in relation to the form and structure of future socialist society lent itself easily to the elaboration of dogma which could claim general "legitimacy" from a selection of quotes from the masters. But the founders of Marxism:

"... never invented specific forms and mechanisms for the development of the new society. They elaborated its socialist ideal ... they provided the historically transient character of capitalism and the historical need for transition to a new stage of social development. As for the **structure of the future society to replace capitalism, they discussed it in the most general terms** and mostly from the point of view of fundamental principles." (5) (emphasis added)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Conclusion

We dare not underestimate the damage that has been wrought to the cause of socialism by the distortions we have touched upon. We, however, continue to have complete faith that socialism represents the most rational, just and democratic way for human beings to relate to one another.

★ **Humankind can never attain real freedom until a society has been built in which no person has the freedom to exploit another person.**

★ **The bulk of humanity's resources will never be used for the good of humanity until they are in public ownership and under democratic control.**

★ **The ultimate aim of socialism, to eliminate all class inequalities, occupies a prime place in the body of civilised ethics even before Marx.**

★ **The all-round development of the individual and the creation of opportunities for every person to express his or her talents to the full can only find ultimate expression in a society which dedicates itself to people rather than profit.**

The opponents of socialism are very vocal about what they call the failure of socialism in Africa.⁽⁶⁾ But they say little, if anything, about Africa's real failure; the failure of capitalism. **Over 90 per cent of our continent's people live out their wretched and repressed lives in stagnating and declining capitalist-oriented economies.** International capital, to whom most of these countries are mortgaged, virtually regards cheap bread, free education and full employment as economic crimes. Western outcries against violations of human rights are muted when they occur in countries with a capitalist orientation.

The way forward for the whole of humanity lies within a socialist framework guided by genuine socialist humanitarianism and not within a capitalist system which entrenches economic and social inequalities as a way of life. Socialism can undoubtedly be made to work without the negative practices which have distorted many of its key objectives.

But mere faith in the future of socialism is not enough. The lessons of past failures have to be learnt. Above all, we have to ensure that its fundamental tenet — socialist democracy — occupies a rightful place in all future practice.

(1) *Has socialism failed?* by Joe Slovo is available from New Era Books and Records, 425 Pitt Street, Sydney 2000. Phone (02) 211 1607. Price \$3.

(2) This must be understood as providing the **immediate** explanation of the way **major** social change manifests itself in a situation in which the relations of production have become obstacles to the development of productive forces.

(3) The type of formulation is preferred to the one occasionally used by Gorbachev that there are certain universal human values which take priority over class values. This latter formulation tends to detract from the inter-dependence of working class and human morality. It also perhaps goes too far in separating morality from its class connection, even though it is clear that the assertion of certain values can be in the mutual interests of otherwise contending classes.

(4) See Lenin, *State and Revolution*.

(5) M Gorbachev in *Pravda*, November 28, 1989.

(6) They conveniently ignore the fact that most of the countries which tried to create conditions for the building of socialism faced unending civil war, aggression and externally-inspired banditry, a situation in which it is hardly possible to build any kind of stable social formation — capitalist or socialist.

After the elections in the GDR

by

Declaration by the Executive Committee
Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (CPPS)
Madrid, April 1990

The result of the election in the GDR favoured the rightist forces, as did the poll in Hungary. Elections will also be held in other socialist republics in the next few months, and communist and other left-wing forces will have to go to them under difficult conditions.

Regardless of any possible all-round analysis that may be undertaken at the end of this electoral process, the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain deems it convenient to state as follows:

1. At our Fifth Central Committee Plenary Session in September 1989, we said that there existed a real need for socialism to correct and overcome past errors thoroughly to apply the scientific-technical revolution to socialist economy, to fight to the utmost against bureaucratism and centralising rigidity; that we consequently saw such process as a policy born of this necessity, a policy which has enjoyed our wholehearted support from the first moment and which we are still backing up as long as it be directed to strengthen socialism.

2. At the same time, we pointed out a series of alarming phenomena that went with this process, phenomena which, should they ever get the upper hand, might endanger socialism and even bring about "a peaceful return to capitalism". Among these we singled out the following:

- the danger of disorganisation and chaos in socialist countries.
- the danger of nationalism.
- the imitation of bourgeois forms of democracy rather than the development of socialist ones.

- the fact that under such conditions, matters would get out of hand for socialist forces who would end up by losing their social hegemony.
- the ensuing predominance of anti-socialist forces.
- hence the very real possibility of a return to capitalism.
- also the danger involved in the pragmatic trend towards trying to improve the situation by weakening the socialist content and undermining internationalism in foreign policies; a trend which entails forsaking ideology when tackling problems of reform as well as concerning the role of imperialism.

We considered that in these countries a struggle was going on between those seeking revolutionary reforms in order to strengthen socialism, to raise and heighten its quality, and those driving for reforms leading to a weakening of the system and eventually to capitalism.

We defined the latter as counter-revolutionaries or anti-socialist reformists and we concluded: **“The destiny of socialism in each of the socialist countries will ultimately depend upon which of these two tendencies shall prevail in them.”**

Our analysis was made from a Western country, conscious of the implacable nature of capitalism, an irreconcilable enemy of socialism and the working class, and aware of the crisis of communism in Spain, of which we have a direct and immediate experience.

3. Facts have unfortunately borne out our analysis. In several socialist countries in Europe these negative phenomena have been increasing to a point where they are seriously jeopardise the very existence of the system.

The legacy of bureaucratism's political forms — a factor that cannot be ignored — and the consequent time lag in reacting to the need for socialist renewal, obviously reinforced by the relentless aggressiveness of imperialism, have made the whole process all the more awkward.

The reality is that today in some socialist countries of Eastern Europe the forces upholding socialism appear to be at a loss while the initiative lies with the reactionary forces....

4. With its population of 16.6 million, the GDR is the tenth industrial power in the world, with great scientific, technical and cultural developments, let alone its sporting triumphs.

All this potential — which belies the very notion of failure — has been until now on the side of the peoples of the world in their struggle for liberation, on the side of the workers.

The GDR has long been training engineers, doctors, economists, highly skilled workers and qualified professionals to help countries which had broken free from imperialism and started along the road of independent growth; it also granted those countries loans and all manner of assistance. Everything seems to indicate that all this potential may from now on go to the opposite side.

5. We cannot but point out how amazingly easy things have been made of late for the reactionary leaders of the other German state. They have acted in

the GDR with total freedom, organising anti-socialist forces, supporting them financially, campaigning in the election, lords and masters of that country.

This laissez-faire on the part of communist forces is astonishing, an unheard of phenomenon in the contemporary history of the class struggle. Such forces — and they had already acted before in shameless intervention (economically, TV, etc) — have actually behaved as if they had conquered the land.

We must bear in mind that these forces, self-appointed bearers of democracy, are the ones who in the FRG ban communists from being civil servants, teachers or even postmen, a repressive measure adopted years ago by a social democratic government.

From an objective point of view, this process of reform has clearly not been directed towards strengthening socialism but towards its liquidation.

After the election, in an extremely complex situation, several sectors of the people have been agitating in defence of socialist gains.

6. The election will not promote efforts for unity between the two German states in which each then keeps its social regime and a status of neutrality. Instead, it will further the efforts by the FRG to simply annex the GDR under the hegemony of the right and the big monopolies.

We do not believe that this is the way to reinforce democracy on the continent. As in so many previous cases, anti-communism leads not to more freedom and democracy but to the growth of reaction and adventurism.

In addition, we must not forget that German nationalism, throughout its history from 1871 until the present, has always had a deeply reactionary character and has been the cause of both world wars, with their monstrous deeds known by all even if forgotten by many.

The USA and the German right are trying to set up a united Germany which is politically conservative and a member of NATO, thus extending this imperialist military alliance closer to the Soviet border, while the internal cohesion of the Warsaw Treaty is seriously damaged.

7. The CPPS pleads for the neutrality of the two Germanies in a Europe aiming to scrap military blocs, where every state maintains full sovereignty, including the GDR.

Equally, we advocate that the frontiers resulting from World War II should be rigorously respected. We call upon workers and democratic forces to oppose any rebirth of vindictiveness and pan-German chauvinism.

The CPPS reiterates at the same time our staunch solidarity with all those in the GDR, Hungary and the rest of East European countries who are fighting to save the achievements of socialism and will not accept defeat.

We reiterate our support for every process of revolutionary reform, something which cannot advance upon the basis of an ideological surrender of the forces defending the socialist system.

We shall continue to side unwaveringly with all the socialist countries — a world-wide historical achievement of the workers — and with the struggle of the peoples who oppose imperialism.

Finally, we call upon the working class, intellectuals and all progressive sectors to oppose the current anti-communist campaign whose outcome, as the elections in the GDR and Hungary have shown, is not the strengthening of democracy but the strengthening of reaction and conservatism.

Critical and united

Extracts from a speech by Meir Vilner, General Secretary,
Communist Party of Israel (CPI), at CPI Central Committee
32nd plenary session, January 1990.

Published in *CPI Information Bulletin*, January/February 1-2/1990

Two days of discussion, during which some 70 comrades have spoken and many have made written proposals, are not easy to wind up. But one may state clearly that this was a most democratic conference.

Many of the participants in the debate dealt with the lessons our Party has to draw from the changes taking place in the socialist countries and in the Communist movement. The speakers at the conference have strengthened the conclusion of the Central Committee that our Party has to evaluate independently not only the issues and events within its direct responsibility, but also general issues in the Soviet Union and in other socialist countries.

We must not to copy mechanically the experience in other countries because one of the mistakes of the Communist movement was copying what happened in the Soviet Union.

Our Party supported perestroika from the moment it was proclaimed because, in our opinion, it is vital to socialism and the development of its democratic and human nature. Perestroika is meant to guarantee more socialism, but this does mean that in its course no political and economic mistakes were made and that no big difficulties have arisen in the implementation of its goals.

Perestroika has brought a new way of thinking and an improvement in international relations, democratisation and openness. At the same time, the relations between the peoples have become more tense and the economic situation is hard, there is even a setback.

Already in 1987, we told the Soviet comrades that the Soviet Communist Party might lose control and we expressed our concern about the trend of

development in certain issues that meant passing from one extremism to another. Our Soviet comrades answered us that these are natural difficulties in a transitory period that can be overcome.

But meanwhile it turns out that the difficulties are bigger than expected. It is no accident that Comrade Gorbachev emphasises in his latest speeches that democracy is not anarchy and that ill-considered steps have led to a situation of shortage of basic commodities while the amount of money in the hands of the public has grown too fast.

During the transition to new systems of ownership and decentralisation of the economy, irregularities have arisen and a grey market has developed where many products can be bought at excessive prices.

Recently, the relations between the nationalities have taken unprecedented sharp dimensions. In spite of efforts by the Party leadership and by Comrade Gorbachev personally, the leaders of Lithuania stick to their position of leaving the Soviet Communist Party and the Union of Soviet Republics.

They ignore the warning that the disbanding of the Soviet Union might lead to grave results for Lithuania itself and for the whole Soviet Union, and harm the cause of peace in Europe and in the world. The developments in Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as in other republics show that the authorities have lost control and chauvinist organisations stage real pogroms.

For the time being one may say, therefore, that so far perestroika and its repercussions in other socialist countries have not brought more socialism, and that in some socialist countries Communist Parties are abandoning their ideological basis.

One may estimate that in the general elections taking place during 1990 in the GDR, in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Bulgaria, the Communist Parties will have to work hard to get more votes than the competing parties.

There are also other alarming signs. While attempting to build a more democratic society, undemocratic methods are used to close the media to those who have remained faithful to innovation but on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. In Rumania things have reached a real threat of outlawing the Communist Party. The meaning of such a step will be the death of democracy.

Our Party and the Soviet Union

In this conference, the question was raised of why we are saying that “we were misled and consequently we misled others”. Saying so means that we have never knowingly supported distortions and crimes. At that time, we were sure that the reports in the West about the crimes were false.

It must be remembered that once not only Communist parties but also socialist parties and even bourgeois parties praised Stalin in spite of the press reports. Immediately after the truth became known at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, our Party condemned the crimes and distortions.

In the post-Stalin era, we encountered negative things and made our remarks to the Soviet comrades about them. But we did not publicise our crit-

ical attitude, in the light of the anti-Soviet atmosphere and agitation. Usually we did not report about it to the Party activists. In many cases, this was unjustified.

Our Party has learned the lesson from this experience and today we are more critical and independent also in issues that are not our direct responsibility. In issues within our direct responsibility, we have always been independent.

So today, when our Party supports perestroika, democratisation, openness and the new way of thinking in the Soviet Union, we express to activists and in public our criticism of things in the Soviet Union that seem to us wrong.

Thus, for instance, we criticised giving nationalist organisations like *Pamiat* the possibility to operate and the weakness in defending national minorities in some republics of the Soviet Union. We are concerned at the state of affairs that has also anti-semitic expressions, as a result of which many Jews are now leaving the Soviet Union.

The power of socialism

Our basic solidarity with the Soviet Union was absolutely right. Evaluating the annals of the Soviet Union, one must not pass from one extremism to another.

The socialist regime in the Soviet Union brought its people great historical achievements. The Soviet contribution to the struggles for national and social liberation and for safeguarding world peace is enormous.

In all these issues we showed, and rightly so, solidarity with the socialist Soviet Union. We were enthusiastic at the victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany and her support for the liberation of our country from the British foreign rule and for the establishment of two independent states, Jewish and Arab.

Just as it is wrong to present the history of the Soviet Union in rosy colours only, it is wrong to describe it in black colours only.

On the argument that socialism as such has disappointed, we have to answer not with slogans but with a deep-reaching analysis. We have to emphasise that the positive sides are socialism, while the negative sides contradict socialism.

Nobody expected developments such as those now happening in the socialist countries. Our reaction must take into account the new reality but without gliding into emotionality. Everything must be done so that socialism overcomes its present conditions, but one of the preconditions is not to abandon the Communist, Marxist-Leninist ideology.

We must not forget that, as in the past, so too today, imperialism does not hide that its basic aim is the liquidation of socialism. Today this cannot be done by military means, therefore political means are used. Imperialism also imposes political conditions and adds dictates to every proposal for economic aid to the East European countries.

Marxism-Leninism was not and is not a dogma. Engels, in the introduction he wrote to one of the translated editions of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, noted that if he had written the *Manifesto* at that time, he would have written some parts differently. Still more so if we examine contemporary capitalism and its present development that could not be foreseen by Marx, Engels or Lenin.

Equally, the need to adapt concepts to reality exists in socialism. Experience proves that when no such adaptation is made, the Communist parties make mistakes and pay a heavy price. However, it has been proved in some periods that when the Communist parties detect correctly and in time the changing conditions, socialism is capable of developing at a more rapid pace than capitalism.

Socialism has an enormous potential. Socialism is the future of mankind, even if the process will be very complex and long. The developed capitalist countries have indeed proved they have a high capacity of scientific-technical development, but it must be understood that the source of the greater part of their wealth lies in neo-colonialist exploitation. It must be pointed out that capitalism has not escaped, and cannot escape, its social antagonisms.

On certain political-ideological issues related to developments in some socialist countries

Statement adopted by the Central Committee
Communist Party of India (Marxist)
May 28 31, 1990

The international Communist movement today is faced with a serious crisis. The ongoing events in the East European countries constitute a big setback for world socialism. The developments taking place in the Soviet Union are a cause for deep concern and anxiety to all Communists and supporters of socialism. After 72 years of the existence of the USSR, separatist movements are raising their head. Lithuania has openly declared its intention to secede, a compromise however is sought to be worked out. The economic situation is in a disarray of crisis proportions leading to mass discontent. The problems arising in implementing the reforms are adding to the prevailing confusion and causing further anxiety.

These developments have placed the international Communist movements in a difficult and extremely complicated situation. Many Communist parties in Europe are losing their class moorings. East European parties have changed their name by adopting "social democracy". The Italian Communist Party has moved further right from its Euro-Communist position and has dropped the word "Communist" from its name. These developments are having their negative impact on other Communist parties in the world, including those in

the third world countries.

Gloating over these developments, imperialism and the forces of world reaction have unleashed a massive propaganda blitz against Communists and socialism. The world is entering into a period of a fiercer struggle between the forces of imperialism and socialism in various spheres. It is, therefore, necessary that a deeper analysis of these developments be undertaken, in the light of Marxist-Leninist understanding, drawing correct conclusions and lessons and on that basis unify our Party.

Differences in the international Communist movement

The post-World War II period was witness to many differences in the international Communist movement. These were based on the divergent assessments of the correlation of class forces at different points of time, both at the international and national level.

Following the victory over fascism, which was a great historic event after the October Revolution, an erroneous understanding had emerged in some parties that the change in the correlation of forces on the world scale warrants a change in the forms of struggle in carrying out the social transformation in different countries.

Earl Browder, the then General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA), had advocated that the alliance forged by the four powers in the war would continue after the defeat of fascism. Totally ignoring the irreconcilable contradiction between imperialism and socialism, he argued that the process of socialist transformation would be peaceful and evolutionary.

Hence he concluded that there was no longer a need for the vanguard Party of the working class to organise and lead the revolution. Such an understanding culminated with the CPUSA under Browder's leadership converting itself into a club. There was only one dissenting voice, that of William Foster.

The French Communist leader Duclos, supported by the Communists in other countries, raised protest against such a liquidationist concept, which finally led to the expulsion of Browder. The CPUSA once again rallied around revolutionary principles. At that moment, such tendencies were seen in some other quarters also.

CPSU 20th Congress

Following the 20th Congress of the CPSU, differences once again arose in the international Communist movement leading to serious inner-party struggles in many Communist parties. The advocacy of peaceful co-existence, peaceful transition and peaceful competition by the CPSU leadership under Khrushchev diverted the Communist movement from its revolutionary path. The distortion of the Leninist concept of peaceful co-existence and the advocacy of peaceful transition threw the door open for revisionism and class collaboration of the worst kind.

As a consequence, many a Communist party was virtually decimated. The Communist movements in the developing world, like in Egypt, Sudan and Iraq

as well as in other countries, were all victims of this revisionist onslaught that left the international Communist movement weakened.

This was combined with an unhistorical evaluation of the role of Joseph Stalin. The CPI(M) rejects the approach which, in the name of correcting the personality cult, is negating the history of socialism.

The incontestable contribution of Joseph Stalin in defence of Leninism, against Trotskyism and other ideological deviations, the building of socialism in the USSR, the victory over fascism and the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Soviet Union enabling it to acquire enough strength to check imperialist aggressive moves cannot be erased from the history of socialism.

A prolonged debate on crucial issues dividing the international Communist movement begun by the 20th CPSU Congress was sought to be resolved with the declaration adopted at the 1957 Conference. While 61 parties attended this conference, the declaration was issued in the name of 12 ruling Communist parties. But within two years differences again cropped up. In this background, the international conference of 81 Communist and Workers parties held in Moscow in 1960 produced a document which sought to resolve these controversies and provide a guideline for the world Communist movement.

The unity thus forged was once again short-lived. Open polemics started between the CPSU and CPC. This led to a split in the international Communist movement. The CPC, which opposed right revisionism, soon became victim of left adventurous deviation culminating in the "Cultural Revolution", and leading to many other deviations which had disastrous consequences for the world Communist movement.

Formation of CPI(M)

The struggle against revisionism in the Indian Communist movement culminated in the formation of the CPI(M) in 1964. The CPI(M) was united primarily on the strategy and tactics of the Indian revolution. The CPI(M) Program included adherence to the revolutionary understanding of the 1957 and 1960 documents. Paragraph 118 of the Program states:

"Our Party firmly upholds the statement of representatives of 81 Marxist-Leninist parties held in Moscow in November 1960, as also the earlier Declaration of 1957, which embody the revolutionary analysis of the present world situation. These two great Marxist-Leninist documents are an invaluable guide for all Communists, the working class and all progressive forces the world over. The Communist Party of India upholds the revolutionary principles of these two documents and defends the purity of Marxism-Leninism, guarding itself against the danger of all revisionist and dogmatic deviations..."

The discussion on the differences in the international Communist movement could not be taken up immediately because for nearly two years after the formation of CPI(M), the overwhelming majority of the leadership was under detention in prison.

After their release, a thorough inner-party discussion was organised. These

issues were finally clinched at the Burdwan Plenum in 1968. It must be noted that in the united Party, in 1963 we who formed the CPI(M) had advocated a thorough inner-party discussion in order to unify the Party given the gravity of the issues. This was rejected by the then dominant leadership.

Euro-Communism

In the early 1970s, yet another deviation arose in the international Communist movement. That of Euro-Communism. Many European Communist parties were affected by the right-revisionist outlook. They openly advocated their views in the Berlin Conference of 29 Communist and workers parties of Europe held in June 1976.

The PB of the CPI(M) adopted a statement on the deliberations of this conference. This clearly demarcated our position on the basic Marxist-Leninist concepts like proletarian internationalism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, social democracy and the transition to socialism. We reiterated our adherence to Marxism-Leninism.

The Euro-Communist deviation was justified by its proponents as necessary to attract large sections of the people behind the Communist parties. However, on the contrary, all these parties declined in terms of electoral support and influence.

Recent developments

After an interval of over a decade, the recent developments in certain socialist countries, leading to a situation of crisis, are naturally generating controversies in the international Communist movement. The CPI(M) Central Committee, reacting to these developments, from time to time adopted resolutions on various issues that emerged: the May and August 1988 resolutions on certain ideological issues and on the developments in the Soviet Union; the resolutions of the XIII Party Congress; the July and October 1989 resolutions on the developments in China, and Poland and Hungary; and the Polit Bureau statement on the developments in East European countries.

While we reacted to these events, we had deferred a fuller and deeper inner-party discussion of these developments mainly because of two factors. Firstly, the general elections to the Lok Sabha and later to the assemblies had engaged the whole Party in a big political battle. Secondly, in order to enable us to make an in-depth study of these developments, the PB-CC decided to send a delegation of our Party to discuss with the CPSU, CPC, Workers Party of Korea and the Japanese Communist Party.

The CPI(M) from its inception had to carry on a fierce struggle against revisionism and dogmatism. During this period of 25 years, the CPI(M) was guided by its independent judgment on the basis of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and from its own experience. It is the same approach that continues to guide the CPI(M) in assessing the ongoing developments in the socialist countries and the implications they have for the strategy and tactics of the world Communist movement.

In order to do so, it is necessary to begin by self-critically examining and

reassessing the changes that have taken place in the international situation since the 1960s and the consequences that these have on our understanding in relation to the one presented in the 1957 and 1960 documents.

Changes in the international situation

The 1957 and 1960 documents described the main content of our epoch as “the triumph of socialism and Communism on a world scale”. The 1960 document continued “the time is not far off when socialism’s share of world production will be greater than that of capitalism ... capitalism will be defeated in the decisive sphere of human endeavour, the sphere of material production.... The world capitalist system is going through an intense process of disintegration and decay. The most developed capitalist country has become a country of the most distorted militarist economy.... Capitalism impedes more and more the achievements of modern science and technology, in the interests of social progress.... A new stage has begun in the development of the general crisis of capitalism....”

Three major conclusions were drawn from such an assessment. First, socialism is going to surpass capitalism, in the sphere of material production, in a short time. Secondly, capitalism is going through an intense process of disintegration. Thirdly, capitalism impedes more and more the use of achievements of science and technology.

All these combined to form the basis for depicting a new stage, i.e. the third stage in the general crisis of capitalism. It was elaborated that the capitalist crisis was not limited to the economic sphere alone, as the earlier periodic crises of capitalism, but envelops the political, cultural and ideological spheres as well. On this basis, it was visualised that the revolutionary movement in different countries is bound to advance culminating in the collapse of the world capitalist system.

Such an assessment was made on the basis of the developments of the 1960s: the collapse of the colonial system, aggravation of world social contradictions and the advances of the socialist countries in different spheres. But it did not take into account the possibilities of capitalism making use of every available means, particularly neo-colonial exploitation, for its development.

Further, it ignored the fact that while socialism has advanced in relatively backward countries; the main citadels of capitalism remained intact. World capitalism was therefore still capable of utilising the advances of the scientific and technological revolution for its growth, despite the continuation of the general crisis of the system.

The general crisis of capitalism was, we can say in retrospect, simplistically understood as its immediate and total collapse. The historical inevitability of capitalism’s collapse was understood as its imminency. This was a serious error leading to the erroneous understanding of the immediate triumph of socialism on a world scale.

Marx and Engels in the (Communist Manifesto) clearly stated, “The bourgeois cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of

production and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society.”

Simultaneously, the experience of the last two decades of socialist construction also shows that the socialist countries had passed into a period of stagnation, notwithstanding the tremendous leaps of development that took place earlier.

Such an assessment of the 1957 and 1960 documents prevented a concrete scientific study of the changes which were taking place in the capitalist world as well as in the socialist countries in relation to the development of productive forces. This has a bearing on the assessment of the present developments and the long time that it took to take note of the recent lags in the growth rate of the socialist economies which contributed to the present crisis situation.

It must, however, be noted that the USSR had to divert a substantial part of its resources to meet the imperialist challenges of the cold war and arms drive. For capitalism, militarism at a certain stage in its development becomes necessary for further economic growth. While, for socialism, arms expenditure means the corresponding reduction in resources available for economic growth, especially consumer goods. While lack of timely and correct reforms prevented the full utilisation of socialism's potential, this factor also contributed to the lags in growth rates.

Socialist advance

Notwithstanding the recent lags, it must be realised that the October Socialist Revolution in the Soviet Union ushered in a new epoch in the history of mankind. It was a source of inspiration for the world working class to intensify its struggle for social revolutions in their own countries and for the national liberation movement which found in the Soviet Union a firm ally in the struggle against imperialism.

The fact that socialist revolutions triumphed in relatively backward economies and not in the advanced capitalist countries themselves posed innumerable problems. The colossal task of raising levels of productive forces and the collective consciousness of the people on whose basis the foundations of the future socialist states were to rest was a task beset with innumerable problems and complications.

Embarking on such an uncharted path in human history, the October Revolution, defeating imperialist armed intervention, its economic blockade and the Civil War, not only consolidated itself but developed to set an example of what a socialist revolution is capable of achieving. It was able to build a strong industrial base. It put an end to the feudal stranglehold on agriculture by guaranteeing land to the tiller. It raised its levels further by organising state and collective farms. The establishment of a society ending the exploitation of man by man, the guarantee of the right to work, free education, health, housing, old age pensions and other social security measures which no capitalist country has been able to fully ensure, signified an advance of human civilisation. This was a source of inspiration for the toiling peoples the world over.

It was because of these advances that the Soviet Union was able to play the leading role in inflicting a crushing defeat on the world fascist forces. The radical change in the world correlation of class forces that this brought about helped the success of the socialist revolution in the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Korea and the collapse of the old colonial system. In these countries that embraced socialism, the success story of the USSR was repeated -- rapid economic development, extension of social services, etc. The superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist system in transforming backward economies was thus proved.

In the post-World War 2 period, the socialist nations emerged as a mighty force that influenced world developments. They were a source of immense help to the national liberation movements and contributed to the political liberation of many countries. The map of present day Asia and Africa would have been different but for the unique contribution of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The victory of the Korean people, the heroic, prolonged and victorious struggle of the Vietnamese people and the victory of the Cuban revolution could not have been consolidated but for the assistance and support of the world socialist community, particularly the Soviet Union. The economic development of the third world countries was also made possible with the socialist assistance that was selflessly rendered.

Socialism's relentless efforts for world peace combined with its advance that broke the nuclear monopoly of the USA succeeded in checking imperialist attempts to blackmail the whole world and ensured 45 years without a world war. The achievement of nuclear parity by the Soviet Union contributed the most in forcing US imperialists to the negotiating table. These developments have inspired millions of people the world over to the cause of peace and socialism.

Capitalism's growth -- intensified exploitation

While these achievements of socialism were on the basis of establishing an exploitation free society, the last two decades of capitalist development has not been due only to its utilisation of the scientific and technological revolution. It has been achieved on the basis of a tremendous exploitation of the people and resources of the third world.

Evolving ever-newer forms of neocolonial exploitation, operating through multinational corporations which control over four-fifths of the capitalist world's productive forces. and inflicting adverse terms of trade against the developing countries, capitalism on a world scale has been able to register advances.

This process is nakedly manifested today in the conditions of the peoples of the third world, the poverty, the illiteracy and social deprivation resulting in back-breaking debt. The overall long-term debt of all the developing countries in 1987 stood at over \$1,000 billion dollars. In some countries, the debt accounts for nearly a half of their individual GNPs.

These methods of exploitation continue to intensify and as a consequence, the social contradiction between the peoples of the third world and imperia-

lism continues to aggravate. Further, capitalism's post-war growth has been marked by militarism, the tremendous increase in arms expenditure and the emergence of the powerful military-industrial complex in the USA.

The various welfare measures that emerged in the capitalist countries, as a response to the socialist challenge in the post-war period, were due in the main to the centuries long struggle of the working class in these countries.

However, the last few years are witness to growing attacks on the social benefits of the working class and the poorer sections. The modernisation of production due to the scientific and technological revolution was accompanied by a counter-offensive of capital to launch attacks on working people.

Unemployment is on the rise and has touched an all time high in the post-war period. In the USA for instance, as compared to the late 70s, the numbers below the poverty line increased from 24 million to 32 million in 1988. 3.5 million are homeless and a fifth of the population borders on the poverty threshold. In contrast, the top 1.5 per cent own nearly 25 per cent of all individual wealth and the top ten per cent own 65 per cent of the nation's wealth.

Apart from such increasing economic inequalities, the social and moral fabric is degenerating. Drug abuse, criminal activities of all kinds are on the rise. Capitalism's growth during the last two decades has been at the expense of intensifying its inherent nature of exploitation both at home and abroad. Capitalism can never be a crisis free system.

Epoch of transition

While making necessary corrections to an assessment of the international situation as warranted by the developments of the last two decades, it must be emphasised that the main assessment of the present epoch as that of a transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale, which had started with the October Revolution, remains fully valid.

The period of transition from capitalism to socialism cannot be mechanically and simplistically interpreted to mean the immediate collapse of capitalism or the immediate triumph of socialism on a world scale. The struggle to consolidate socialism will go through many twists and turns leading at times to setbacks or reverses. However, the process started by the October Revolution, of a historically determined, world wide transition, is irreversible.

While reasserting this, we must self-critically accept that two major errors were committed by the international Communist movement of which the CPI(M) is an integral contingent. First, the underestimation of the capacity of world capitalism to adapt to new conditions and evolve newer methods of neo-colonial exploitation for its advance. This was coupled with an overestimation of the international revolutionary situation.

Secondly, the underestimation of revisionist and dogmatic deviations which led to tactics that adversely affected the strength of the international working class movement and blunted the edge of the class struggle through the predominance of economism. This was true both in relation to the movement of class struggle on the world scale and the impact it had on the collec-

tive consciousness of the peoples in the socialist countries themselves.

This can be seen in the rapidity with which the ruling Communist parties in East Europe abdicated their role and embraced social democracy. While the objective factors for the intensification of class struggle existed, the subjective factor, i.e. the degree of organisation and socialist class consciousness of the working class on a world scale, was lagging.

It must be clearly noted that without the subjective factor -- the Party of the working class, guided by revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism, with live contact with the aspirations of the people, organising and leading their struggles and raising the collective consciousness of the people -- no revolutionary advance is possible.

World social contradictions

Changes in the international situation, of world capitalism and world socialism cannot lead to the conclusion that the fundamental contradictions of our epoch today stand modified. However, the international situation where the world forces of peace, national independence, democracy and socialism continue to develop, the methods for the resolution of some contradictions may necessarily vary.

The CPI(M) Central Committee resolution of August 1988 has clearly stated our Party's stand on the issue of contradictions and expressed our open disagreement with the assessment made by the CPSU on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution.

In our XIII Congress, we had stated that though imperialism was trying to resolve its contradictions with socialism through a world war, war in the present circumstances can be nothing else but a nuclear war, in which no one can be the winner.

Under these circumstances, while imperialism continues its war preparations, the intensification of the central contradiction of our epoch, i.e. between imperialism and socialism, reflects itself in fierce economic conflict, the attempt to prevent socialism's advance on a world scale both militarily and ideologically and the continuous attempts to internally subvert the socialist countries. The latter aspect can be seen clearly during the last one year in the developments in the People's Republic of China and in Eastern Europe.

The sheer existence and strength of socialism and the possession of nuclear weapons by different countries deter the resolution of the inter-imperialist contradiction through war. But yet, the contradiction continues to intensify despite the emergence of the USA as the dominant industrial and military power after World War II.

It finds expression in the economic battles between the imperialist giants, for the re-carving of their respective spheres of influence. The rivalry between the USA, EEC (and within the EEC between West Germany and others) and Japan is expressing itself in constant currency and trade wars. With the forthcoming 1992 Integrated Europe, these contradictions are bound to further intensify. The fact that the rates of economic growth in the 80s are less than

those in the 60s and 70s in the capitalist countries will also find expression in the intensification of this contradiction.

The contradiction between the third world countries and imperialism need no longer necessarily lead to the process of direct colonisation as in the pre-war period. New neo-colonial methods of exploitation, exploitation through multi-national corporations, unfair terms of trade and blandishment continue as methods of imperialist exploitation. But in certain cases, it does not hesitate to embark on naked armed intervention as in the case of Panama recently.

The extent of misery in the developing countries can be understood by the fact that in the 1980s (data provided by the World Bank till 1987) the average annual rate of growth for all developing countries has been *minus* 2.6 per cent. Compare this to the period 1965-1980 when this figure was *plus* 8.1 per cent. Such an intensification of contradiction is pregnant with the possibilities of fierce peoples struggles against imperialism.

The deepening crisis of the world capitalist order and the resultant cuts in the social security measures and rising unemployment creates circumstances for the intensification of the class struggle in the developed capitalist countries.

The intensification of this contradiction, however, is sought to be blunted through the spread of reformist illusions. Capitalism has tremendous capacity to bribe sizable sections of the working class in different developed capitalist countries. It shares a small part of its profit to keep the rule of capital thriving.

The CPI(M) Central Committee resolution of May 1988 and the XI11 Congress Political Resolution have reiterated our assessment that notwithstanding the changes in the international situation, the fundamental contradictions of our epoch continue to intensify. The changed circumstances however impose conditions where the resolution of some of these contradictions will necessarily have to vary.

Developments in East Europe

It is in this background of the intensification of the central contradiction of our epoch that we have to assess the developments in the East European countries.

The anti-Communist upheavals that marked the recent developments in East European countries, the victory of anti-socialist, rightist and centrist forces in the recent elections in these countries and the attempts at the restoration of capitalism constitute a severe setback to the forces of world socialism.

The distortions and deviations from the principles of building socialism leading to mass discontent has resulted in the alienation of the people from the Communist parties and the socialist state.

This alienation, coupled with the neglect of ideological work amongst the masses by these parties, have created conditions that are being exploited to the hilt by imperialism and forces of internal reaction, thus permitting a

renewed counter-revolutionary offensive on the international Communist movement.

The East European countries under Communist leadership after World War II had brought about fundamental social transformation ending the rule of the old exploitative classes and laying the basis for multi-dimensional socialist advance.

During the last four decades, in many of these countries, social security of its population had been assured and some of them, particularly the GDR, registered economic advances comparable with or even outstretching some capitalist countries. However, despite such advances, these states failed to cope with the ever-growing aspirations of the people.

Major distortions in building socialism

However, the recent events reveal that there have been many distortions in the building of socialism and the functioning of socialist states in these countries.

(1) In the sphere of running a socialist state and ensuring socialist democracy as a higher form of democracy compared to bourgeois democracy, there were many deformations. The concept of proletarian dictatorship was reduced to the dictatorship of the Party and this at times to the dictatorship of the leading coterie of the Party. This resulted in the growth of bureaucratism and in the violation of civil liberties and democratic rights. There were distortions in the implementation of the principle of democratic centralism within the Party.

(2) Instead of drawing in larger and larger sections of the people and ensuring their participation in the spheres of social and political activity, these distortions resulted in violations of socialist legality and restrictions on individual freedom, which contributed to the alienation of large sections of the people from the Party and the state.

(3) There were also departures in the manner of organising socialist economy which resulted in shortcomings in the levels of growth rates as compared to the capitalist countries in recent years.

(4) As productive forces under socialism develop rapidly, the methods of economic management have to correspondingly change. By not effecting such timely changes, lower rates of growth were registered. The absence of necessary changes and the dominance of state bureaucracy prevented the gains of the scientific and technological revolution from being integrated into economic production. The consequent discontent among the people further strengthened the process of alienation.

(5) The failure to draw proper lessons and effect correct changes in time, combined with neglect of ideological work, created conditions whereby anti-socialist forces exploited this discontent and succeeded in posing bourgeois democracy and capitalism as better alternatives to socialist democracy and socialism.

Historical factors

It must be noted that the socialist revolutions in these countries did not take place in the normal course of the culmination of the internal class struggle but were achieved in the background of the victory over fascism.

The liberation of these countries by the Red Army and the victory over fascism was welcomed by the people of these countries. Except in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, Communist parties were very weak. Further, several thousand Communists were martyred during the struggle against fascism and defending the cause of Marxism and socialism.

In the absence of any other experience, these countries opted for the Soviet experience of building socialism without taking into consideration the specifics of the concrete conditions prevailing in these countries.

After the initial growth, when problems started appearing in the economy, some of these countries adopted reforms. But these were based on increasing reliance on Western capital which had negative consequences, like in Poland and Hungary.

In the changed circumstances after the defeat of fascism, the former social democratic parties in many of these countries joined the Communist parties *en masse*. In this background, the necessary awareness to ideologically equip the ranks of the parties and building the ideological consciousness of the people required for the upbringing of the socialist man was not carried out.

In the absence of sufficient ideological work, the new generation who had no experience of the horrors of fascism and of capitalist exploitation, were influenced by the propaganda unleashed by Western imperialism and the allure of consumer society.

Instead of adopting a proletarian outlook in tackling the problems faced by distortions in the building of socialism, they tended to embrace bourgeois liberalism. This factor contributed to the serious reverses in the East European countries.

Serious setback

The extent of setback to the forces of the world Communist movement can be seen in the results of the recently held elections where the rightist and centrist parties are emerging victorious. Even by abandoning the Party's name under pressure, by dropping the word "Communist", has not enabled the erstwhile ruling Communist parties to retain the confidence of the people. In Rumania, the situation is so distressing that nobody dares to raise the Red Flag.

World forces of imperialism have made full use of this situation. They actively aided and abetted the internal reactionary forces in these countries. Together they have egged on the people to abandon their socialist past and its achievements. By promising a share of the gains of the scientific and technological revolution, by offering economic partnership to new East Euro-

pean regimes, imperialism is trying its best to restore capitalism in these countries.

Other factors have also undoubtedly contributed in aggravating the situation. First, the policy of glasnost in the Soviet Union allowing the anti-socialist forces to make full use of the media to denounce socialist values encouraged the forces of internal reaction in Eastern Europe to launch an offensive against socialism.

Secondly, the manner in which the new leadership of these parties launched vicious attacks against the former leadership of the Communist parties, the veterans of the anti-fascist struggle, by depicting them as gross embodiments of corruption, charges that so far remain unsubstantiated in many cases, played into the hands of the enemies of socialism.

The negation of socialist history and the denouncements of the leadership have led to the discrediting of the Communist parties in many countries, disarming its ranks from offering any resistance to such a concerted onslaught against socialism.

These developments in East European countries are a major reverse for the forces of world socialism. The CPI(M) cannot but disagree with the CPSU's understanding that these developments constitute a "renewal of socialism". Any underestimation of the degree of reverses in these countries will only divert the international working class movement away from effectively facing the concerted onslaught of imperialism and reactionary forces.

Developments in the Soviet Union

Our Central Committee in its August 1988 resolution had provided the framework in which to assess the recent developments in the Soviet Union. It had rightly stated: "As a Party which takes its stand on Marxism-Leninism, we realise that advance of socialism in any country must be accompanied by increased initiative of the masses both in running the economy and running the state. Lenin's statement 'every cook must learn to govern' must be a growing reality. A concrete form of these initiatives in the various stages of development embrace larger and larger numbers of people. Measures which contribute to the conscious participation of the masses are welcome and should be supported. Measures which free citizens from unnecessary restrictions and provide healthy dialogue within the limits of socialist society strengthen the society.

"But it has to be understood and underlined sharply that all measures will strengthen society if the guiding role of Marxism-Leninism is preserved and the role of the Party as a leading force of society as vanguard of the working class is ensured. Without these latter two conditions new measures would not realise the socialist initiative of the masses and ensure their participation in running the state."

Since this resolution, many developments have taken place at a rapid pace. On the economic front, despite the efforts at restructuring, the economic situation has deteriorated. An especially acute problem is the growth of the

shadow economy which prevents the proper supply of essential commodities and consumer goods to the people. New controversial measures in the economic sphere are being initiated.

Ethnic problems have assumed a grave character with inter-ethnic violence and the rise of secessionist movements in certain regions, particularly the Baltic republics. Inside the CPSU, as against the official platform of the Central Committee, alternative platforms have emerged. These are all matters of serious concern to Communists all over the world.

27th Congress of the CPSU

The CPSU began the process of perestroika and glasnost in 1985. The CPI(M) had recognised the necessity for reforms both in the economic and political spheres in order to overcome distortions to take socialism to a higher stage. At the theoretical level, as Comrade Gorbachev pointed out in the 27th Congress report, the necessity for reforms arose out of the non-correspondence between the productive forces and the existing relations of production. Bringing these two into alignment does not take place automatically.

Economic reforms meant overhauling the management methods of the economy, restructuring industry and agriculture to harness the latest advance in the scientific and technological revolution and to accelerate productivity and the development of the productive forces.

Political reforms were required for the widening and deepening of socialist democracy. Overcoming past distortions which hampered the widest participation of the citizens in the running of state; democracy also meant ensuring effective participation of the working class in the work collectives and management of production. This required putting an end to bureaucratic methods which prevented wider participation and hindered the development of socialist consciousness.

A basic departure

It is from this standpoint that the CPI(M) lent support to the formulations in the 27th Congress for reforms. However, the new Draft Platform of the Central Committee of the CPSU for the 28th Congress makes a departure in relation to certain fundamental Marxist-Leninist propositions. The impact of perestroika and the CPSU's new thinking in international relations is not limited to the Soviet Union, therefore it is necessary to opine on them.

The correction of distortions in the building of socialism is essential for the steady advance of socialism on the world scale. Here a balanced approach is required to the historical experience of building socialism and ensuring the continuity of the revolutionary process. But now in the name of correcting past distortions, a departure is sought to be made from the basic ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

New concept of socialism

The goal of perestroika is stated to be a "humane and democratic" socialism. This is posed as a qualitatively new concept of socialism which renounces the achievements of the socialist past. Seven decades which saw

the working class endeavors in building socialism in the first socialist state, facing civil war and imperialist intervention, the defeat of fascism with enormous sacrifices; socialism built out of backward conditions which guaranteed the right to work, education, housing, health and cultural development.

This history of socialism has to be evaluated within the historical developments of that period. Instead, what is projected is that a transformation is being made from inhuman to humane socialism. Correction of distortions accumulated from the past, innovations to further enrich the humanistic and democratic content of socialism are necessary. But this cannot be done by negation of all that is valuable and socialist in the past.

Universal human values and class values

One of the important components of the "new thinking" is the assertion in Soviet writings of the "priority of universal human values over class values". Universal human values are supposed to have precedence over class interests due to the threat of nuclear war, the consequent annihilation of the human race and the ecological disaster which would destroy the entire planet.

Due importance has to be accorded to finding common ground to avert the threat of nuclear war, for elimination of nuclear weapons and to preserve ecology. There are increasing possibilities to jointly act, in the interests of humanity, on these vital matters. But it will wrong to deduce from this common universal human values attributable to imperialism.

The Marxist world view holds that the class struggle to eliminate exploitation of man by man and for the abolition of classes in society is an inseparable and integral part of the realisation of universal human values. It sees both human values and proletarian class interests as an integral whole. Therefore, it is misleading and incorrect to counterpose universal human values to class values. Only by abolishing classes in society can the fulfillment of human values on a universal scale be ensured.

By elevating universal human values over class values on the basis of a so-called law of an "integral world", the role of class struggle, the class-based view of human society — historical materialism — is being given the go-by. This leads to spreading illusions about the nature of present day imperialism and the world capitalist system.

One of the key quotations used to substantiate new thinking and the priority of universal human values over class interests is cited by Lenin. He is quoted to state: "From the standpoint of the basic ideas of Marxism, the interests of social development are higher than the interests of the proletariat." This sentence taken out of context is from Lenin's *Draft Program* written in 1889.

Lenin's article must be seen in the historical background it was written in and the full quotation must be studied. Lenin wrote this article while in exile about the draft program of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and what it should contain. The article deals with the specific situation in Russia which must be addressed by the program of the Party. The full extract reads

as follows:

“It is especially necessary to recognise the struggle for political liberties against the autocracy as the first political task of the working class party; this task should in our opinion be explained by an exposition of the class nature of the present-day Russian autocracy and the need to overthrow it, not only in the interests of the working class, but also in the interests of social development as a whole. Such a description is essential in regard to both theory and practice, in the theory because from the standpoint of the basic ideas of Marxism, the interests of social development are higher than the interests of the proletariat — the interests of the working class movement as a whole are higher than the interests of a separate section of the workers or of separate phases of the movement; and in practice, this elucidation is essential because of the need to characterise the focal point to which the whole variety of Social Democratic activity — propaganda, agitation, and organisation — must be directed, and round which it must be concentrated.”

From this extract, the point Lenin is driving at becomes clear. In the struggle to overthrow the Tsarist autocracy, the entire social forces oppressed by this system have to be mobilised. At this stage of Russia's revolutionary movement, the struggle to overthrow autocracy is to be identified with the interests of the entire Russian society necessary for its future social development. The interests of the Russian proletariat in this task is subsumed by the overall interests of Russian social development.

The working class as the advanced class in Russian society should take the lead in championing the demand for the overthrow of autocracy and wresting political liberty — a goal in the interests of the “social development” of Russia. The interests of the working class as the vanguard in enabling social advance and emancipation embodies the true relationship between general human values and class interests.

Abstracted from this context, the sentence quoted to substantiate the concept of universal human values having priority over class values applied to today's world leads to undermining the role of class struggle in the social transformation of society.

The Draft Platform states: “While adhering to the positions of the working class and the working people, we abandon the simplified class approach which opposed national and universal human values.” It is on the pleas of abandoning a simplistic approach that the class approach is sought to be abandoned.

This is an outlook which undermines the proletarian internationalist viewpoint and leads to expressing no concern for the worldwide struggle of the working class. Soviet writings are virtually silent on the vital battles for democracy, social emancipation and against imperialism and neo-colonialism going on in different parts of the world.

As Lenin had repeatedly stated, proletarian internationalism means extending solidarity with the working class of all countries, the people fighting for national liberation and struggles against imperialism. This internationalist task

gets sidelined by an erroneous outlook which counterposes universal human values and class values.

De-ideologisation: negates anti-imperialism

Further in Soviet writings, there is constant talk of “de-ideologisation of state to state relations”. Improving state to state relations between countries with different social systems to meet the vital tasks commonly facing all humanity such as the nuclear war danger is one thing. This is in the perspective based on Lenin’s concept of peaceful co-existence.

But to speak of de-ideologising relations between states is to disarm the socialist state and the international working class movement of its ideological basis which guides the very principle of state to state relations. It means negating the anti-imperialist standpoint.

The Draft Platform does not recognise the existence of world imperialism and its menace today. The foreign policy section talks of the efforts to “build a safe civilised world order” and advocates the “principle of balanced interests” with the imperialists countries. It talks of settlement of regional conflicts, states defending their independence from outside interference and demilitarisation and halting the profound disparities developing in different parts of the world, all without a reference to the existence of imperialism and its machinations.

Class character of the state under socialism

The dictatorship of the proletariat in the period of transition from socialism to communism, as Lenin pointed out, can “yield great abundance and variety of political forms”. The forms of proletarian statehood will vary and pass through various phases from defending and consolidating the socialist revolution to the complicated process of building socialism.

It is essential to remember that the State under socialism whatever its form has as its essence proletarian class character. In the name of correcting the distortions of the past, the class character of the state is being abandoned. Giving up the class nature of the State means giving up the revolution itself.

The Draft Platform declares: “The rule-of-law State of the whole people has no room for dictatorship by any class and even less so for the power of a management bureaucracy”. It is misleadingly portrayed as if the dictatorship of the proletariat under socialism represents dictatorship of the working class over the other sections of the people. Whereas the proletarian state power is meant to represent the overwhelming majority of the people against the class enemies both internal and external.

In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx had said that the State in the entire period from socialism to communism can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin, further elaborating this, said that the dictatorship of the proletariat embodies the leading role of the proletariat in building socialism, so long as there are sections among the people with different levels of consciousness born out of socialist property.

Leading role of the Party

Whatever distortions have crept into the form of proletarian state and its functioning, they cannot be corrected by abandoning the class nature of the state itself. The new forms of state power and its institutions require the widest socialist democracy for further strengthening the socialist system. Pluralism of views and dissenting opinions within the socialist framework has to be institutionally encouraged and guaranteed as rights. The leading role of the Party cannot be negated in this process. A multi-party system in this context cannot be unrelated to the role of different classes in the process of revolution. Historically in certain countries, the Party of the working class emerged as the vanguard of the revolution. While other classes and the parties connected with them betrayed the revolution, the Communist Party led the revolution to success. The leading role emerged out of its vanguard role in the revolution. In some countries, certain parties which supported the revolution found a place in the new set up, as in the People's Republic of China. The concept of a "multi-party system" which would undermine the leading role of the Party of the working class and throw up forces which challenge the basic foundations of the socialist system would be detrimental to the development of socialist democracy.

The leading role of the Party and the working class is necessary during the entire period of socialism. The Party, however, should not and cannot replace the class either in running the state or the economy. There have been serious distortions by substituting the role of the class by the Party in the running of the state.

In criticising and correcting this deviation, it should be remembered that all reforms for socialist advance can be registered only when the leading role of the Party is preserved. The leading role does not get translated into a correct relationship between the proletarian state and the Party by imposing it through constitutional sanctions. The Leninist concept of the leading role is of a role won by the Party through its ideological, political and organisational work amongst the people.

Socialist democracy and glasnost

The creation of a socialist system, with socialised means of production and abolition of exploitation of man by man, provides the material basis for practising widest democracy. Socialism does not negate but carries forward the democratic values and traditions achieved by the people under bourgeois democracy.

The bourgeois critics who condemn socialism as inherently anti-democratic gloss over the fact that the bourgeois state is in essence the rule by the exploiting few of the exploited majority. Without economic emancipation, democracy gets emasculated.

Socialism and the proletarian state, while laying the foundations for equality and democracy, had to exercise proletarian power in the earlier period to crush the counter-revolution and eliminate the forces of exploitation. This demanded a centralised apparatus of the State. Such an apparatus was also essential for building a planned economy.

After this phase is over, as the socialist state and system is consolidated, there open up the opportunities for widening democracy and individual initiative and liberties. Socialist democracy becomes correspondingly richer and deeper with immense potential for individual liberties and popular participation corresponding to the development of the socialist system. Such a socialist democracy is qualitatively superior to the democracy found in bourgeois societies which is restricted and hampered by economic inequalities.

However, there have been deformations in the developments of socialist democracy. The earlier methods of running the state machinery were carried over into the subsequent period also. There was a failure to understand the new stage of socialist development and correspondingly the functioning of the state in the new situation. Grave violations of inner-party democracy and socialist legality were a consequence. This led to strengthening of bureaucracy and restriction and repression of individual freedom and initiative.

Lenin in this connection had pertinently observed: "The socialist revolution can only be lasting when this new class learns ... from the political work of government. Only when it enlists the vast mass of working people for this work, when it elaborates forms which enable all working people to adapt themselves easily to the work of governing the state and establishing law and order. Only on this condition is the socialist revolution bound to be lasting."

Therefore, steps to deepen socialist democracy are necessary. They would open further possibilities for the citizens exercise of democratic rights and safeguarding the right of criticism. The widest participation of the people in running the State, administration and economy is essential through self-government and work collectives. Advance of socialism requires reforms of the political structure and the institutions of the State which enrich and strengthen socialist democracy.

Denigration of socialist past

However, the way glasnost has been practised in the Soviet Union has negative features. In the name of widening democracy and political reforms, many deep-rooted trends have developed to condemn the socialist past, undermine the leading role of the Communist Party and glorification of bourgeois democracy. The past has to be critically reviewed to learn correct lessons. But in the name of glasnost, what is taking place in Soviet writings is outright denigration of the achievements of the socialist revolution in the past seven decades.

The August 1988 CC resolution correctly stated: "An outlook which, while criticising the deformities, deviations and distortions of the past, ignores these achievements, prejudices the future and de-links the new democratic reforms from past proletarian history. Such negative attitude towards the past while discussing the shortcomings, deviations and deformities of the earlier period may distort the prospects." Doing so would be to separate the working class and the forces of socialism from its historical experience and curbing its future revolutionary advance.

Further under glasnost, anti-socialist and anti-Marxist propaganda flourishes, but one is unable to see propaganda on the Marxist-Leninist basis to effectively rebut such views amongst the people. Surely the leading role of the Party does not mean only ensuring freedom of expression for all, but also the intervention by the Party to defend scientific socialism and its propagation among the people.

Democratic centralism

The Leninist concept of the vanguard Party is based on the principles of democratic centralism — inner-party democracy, strict discipline, criticism and self-criticism and the minority submitting to the majority.

There is no doubt that in practice, centralism has been emphasised at the expense of democracy in the functioning of the Party even after the internal exploiting classes have been eliminated. Over-centralism resulted in curbing the initiative of primary Party units and prevented the Party members participation and involvement in the formulation of policy and reviewing decisions.

The principle of democratic centralism, which is the internal structure of the Party, has also been indiscriminately applied to state and mass organisations, thereby curbing the initiative of the masses. Emphasis on democratisation of the Party should not lead to the abandonment of the principle of democratic centralism.

Different platforms are being allowed to function inside the Communist Party itself. Free debate and democratic discussions resulting in a majority decision with the minority submitting to it is being replaced by platforms which will result in the creation of different factions. This goes against the fundamental principles of the Leninist Party.

One sees also the strange spectacle of a member of the Central Committee propagandising against socialism and the Party and continuing to be a member of the leading body. Allowing this is nothing but reducing the Party into an amorphous club and to the position of a social democratic party and forgetting the struggle which Lenin waged for the creation of a party of the new type.

The Communist Party must discharge its vanguard role. This is only possible only when the entire membership after the process of inner-party discussions acts on the collective decision as a unified whole.

Social democracy

The social democratic forces have an important role in the struggle for world peace and the prevention of nuclear war. All the more so, since parties of social democracy run governments in Western Europe from time to time. Social democracy still has a strong influence within the working class and broad sections of the people in the advanced capitalist countries. Communists therefore actively seek their co-operation and united efforts in the fight for world peace and for common issues of the working people.

However, despite variations in the role of social democratic parties, all of them are parties of reform within the capitalist system, who advocate class

collaboration. Ideologically, they reject the basic doctrine of Marx, Engels and Lenin in relation to the state and social revolution.

The CPSU Draft Platform now advocates ending the “historical split in the social movement” by healing the rift with social democracy. To merge social democracy with the Marxist Party will be to obliterate the ideology of the working class and dilute scientific socialism. Therefore, social democratic parties cannot be equated with Communist Parties which have common ideological bonds.

Ethnic problem

The problem of nationalities in the Soviet Union has assumed acute forms which is a cause for deep concern. Under Lenin’s leadership, the new Soviet state had laid the foundations of a democratic nationalities policy which at one stroke undid the oppression of past centuries. Since then under socialism, the various nationalities of the union, particularly the backward groups, made tremendous progress, economic, social and cultural.

However, over a period, negative developments took place which were not checked in time nor was this aspect known outside the Soviet Union. It is now evident that the present eruption of the national question is due to an accumulation of problems over a long period. Bureaucratic high-handedness, over-centralisation, violation of the policy of equality of languages, have all contributed to the intensification of the problem which is manifesting in various ways in the different republics.

Further with the development of material conditions under socialism, new socio-economic groupings, new migration patterns and the rise of a new intelligentsia have emerged in the different nationalities.

Serious lags in comprehending, and errors in dealing with these developments have led to the growth of inter-ethnic tensions and national chauvinism. Glasnost has also been exploited by such negative trends to find open expression and to inflame ethnic passions. National chauvinist trends are also propelling secessionist demands in certain republics which go against the basic and vital interests of the working class and the people of that nationality whose welfare and development have been irrevocably tied to the Soviet people of all other nationalities.

The CPSU Platform on nationalities adopted in September 1989 and the subsequent efforts have been trying to settle the immediate problems on a principled basis.

The CPSU rightly stated: “All of Soviet and world experience points to the need not to regard self-determination merely as a single act of realising the right to secession. It is a complex and multi-faceted process involving the assertion of national dignity, the strengthening of political and economic independence and the development of language and culture.”

However, in dealing with ethnic violence and separatism, the role of imperialism in penetrating to foment further tensions and the external intervention by religious fundamentalists forces are being ignored.

All communists and progressives the world over view with grave concern the inter-ethnic situation in the Soviet Union. This is but natural, as it affects the very unity and integrity of the Soviet Socialist Federation. The struggle to implement in letter and spirit the Leninist policy of nationalities in the present-day conditions, a united federation with self-governing republics, will have the full support of communists all over the world.

Economic reforms

Necessity of reforms

As stated earlier, the rationale for economic restructuring was correctly analysed in the 27th Congress. The political report had stated:

“Indeed the socialist productive relations open up broad vistas for the development of productive forces. However, they must be constantly improved and this means outdated economic management must be noted in good time and replaced by new ones. The forms of production relations and economic management and guidance system now in operation took shape basically in the conditions of extensive economic development. These gradually grew out of date and began to lose stimulating effect and in some respects became a brake.”

To overcome the economic crisis as a result of stagnation, urgent reforms were necessary. The debate in the Soviet Union on this issue has revealed diverse trends — which path to take? Questions of centrally planned economy and market relations and forms of property have assumed vital importance.

In a socialist economy, during the entire phase of socialism, commodity-money relations cannot be dispensed with during this stage. Commodity production existed in pre-capitalist formations, capitalism itself is commodity production and it will continue in post-capitalist formations for a long time.

Plan and market

However, the essence of a socialist economy is central planning. Relations based on planning and balanced development are a specific feature of socialism and its greatest inherent advantage over capitalism.

Such a planned growth is possible on the objective basis of socialist means of production; planning provides co-ordinated management of the national economy as a single whole to meet social needs and to maintain by deliberate intervention the proportions required between various types of production. Socialist planning pursues the aim of increasing the socialised productive forces so as to ensure increasing goods and welfare services to the citizens.

Within this framework, the central plan and market relations should not be seen as opposing principles of regulation. The plan should utilise the market relations and regulate it for the immediate economic goals corresponding to the stage of development.

At the present juncture, it is necessary to heighten the efficiency of the centralised planning of the economy. It is also necessary to ensure a degree of

decentralisation to lower units and enterprises to stimulate production and innovation.

The principles of each according to his work will prevail in the entire period of socialism. This means material incentives have a definite role to play in the building of socialism. This principle cannot be skipped or dispensed with under socialism.

While material incentives are necessary, continuous efforts to develop the collective consciousness so that personal interests are subordinated to social needs have to be undertaken. Without this, socialist consciousness cannot be fostered. An important element of reforms is the vitalisation of democracy and democratic management mechanisms have to function effectively to enhance labour productivity and to heighten the socialist consciousness of the working class.

In the context of the above stated necessity for economic reforms, there are justified grounds to be alarmed about the direction of reforms undertaken in the Soviet Union. The Draft Platform, under the section entitled *For Effective Plan Market Economy*, recognises that "one of the most difficult aspects of economic reforms is finding an organic combination of plan and market methods to regulate economic activity".

But subsequently however, the Draft Platform proceeds to state that: "The creation of a full-fledged market economy requires the formation of markets of consumer goods, capital goods, securities investment, currencies and research and development, and an early reform of the financial, monetary and credit system."

The Platform envisages the market, instead of planning, regulating the economy. It states: "The restructuring of the price formation is an *sine qua non* condition for the market to start regulating the economy."

In the name of a full-fledged market economy, the main emphasis on market economy and talk of its regulating the economy, undermines the vital role of central planning.

Market relations and commodity-money relations, unless integrated into a single economic mechanism under planning, will lead to increasing income differentiation and erosion of social priorities under socialism. It will lead to unbalanced development with the profit motive becoming dominant.

Primacy of social ownership

The basis for socialist economy and the socialist system is the social ownership of the means of production and socialised production. Under socialism at present, three forms of property exist: state owned, co-operative or collective and individual. The sphere of the last named at present is only minor. State, collective and co-operative enterprises make up more than 95 per cent of the total production.

The new measures began with the development of co-operatives in those spheres, previously with the state, such as services and distribution. Now co-operatives for production, group ownership and individual ownership of

means of production in industry and agriculture are envisaged.

The Draft Platform talks of "deep restructuring of relations of property" and advocates diversity of forms of property. Then it proceeds to make up the surprising and untenable claim that "equal and sound competition" between different forms of property "is the economic basis of civil freedom. That is, the Platform declares that in the Soviet Union, private property competing on equal terms with socially owned property is necessary to guarantee democracy and civil freedoms."

This approach is totally un-Marxist and accepts the bourgeois thesis that only private property and market provides free choice and hence the basis for freedom.

Socialist property relations have different levels of socialisation. Periodic adjustment and regulation of the different forms are necessary and economic reform should legitimately cover this aspect. But increasing socialisation of production and going to a higher stage of socialism requires the primacy of the state owned forms of ownership and the collectives.

The Soviet government has placed before the Supreme Soviet in May 1990 a program for the transition to a "regulated market economy" which will see a qualitatively new expansion of market forces. To be put into operation in stages by 1992, the linking of prices to market forces is bound to lead to growing inflation. The program also advocates the creation of a labour market which will lead to a serious problem of unemployment.

Not emphasising the primacy of public ownership and expanding market relations in an unregulated fashion in all spheres of the economy will pose serious problems in solving the current crisis of the economy in a socialist manner.

Danger of undermining socialist system

The whole gamut of economic reforms in the Soviet Union, plan and market restructuring, forms of property, price reforms, unrestrained opening to the world capitalist market and integrating with its mechanisms are all questions where there are genuine fears that these may lead to adverse consequences for the socialist system.

The lessons of the history of economic reforms in Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and Hungary, must be drawn. In both these countries, faced with the deadlock created by the mechanical adoption of the Soviet model, timely corrections were not made. Instead, the economies of these countries were opened to the play of market forces. Western credits and heavy capital imports resulted in hyper-inflation and unemployment. The consequent mass discontent resulted in the erosion of the socialist system. Economics, as Lenin pointed out, ultimately is a matter of politics.

The need for reform of the socialist economies is a vital and urgent task. Steps are to be taken to work out an effective policy to benefit from the scientific and technological revolution; socialist cost accounting systems and new management procedures and to improve the socialist commodity economy

and market under centralised planning.

The bourgeois propaganda blitz about the supremacy of the market and its correlation with free choice and democracy must be decisively rejected. The socialist system and the planned economy provide the basis for creative innovations to enhance the productive forces, labour productivity and emergence of appropriate relations of production.

Capitalism: no alternative

Marxism-Leninism is the source for developing and perfecting socialism. It is this inexhaustible spring that can nourish socialism's new thrust forward overcoming the present problems and correcting distortions, not the historically obsolete system of capitalism.

Exploitation of man by man and crisis are inherent in capitalist production. Exploitation occurs not because the workers are cheated or because of unfair exchange in the market. Exploitation takes place because there exists under capitalism a commodity — labour power — whose use itself creates a value larger than what it can command on the market. Surplus value generation, profit, the motive force and exploitation takes place in the capitalist production process itself. Class exploitation is inherent in the dynamics of capitalist production notwithstanding any amount of social welfare measures.

Emancipation from this exploitation means directly the overthrow of this system. It is not only a moral question. It is a historic necessity based on scientific realities. Capitalism, therefore, can in no way be the alternative in solving the problems arising out of the process of building and consolidating socialism.

The greatness, validity and continued relevance of Marxism-Leninism lies in the fact that it shows the historical inevitability of the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of socialism on the basis of scientific analysis.

The process of humanity's transition to socialism is a process of continuous struggle for ending the exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation on the world scale. But this process, as we have seen, is a complex one marked by a continuous struggle between the forces of revolution and counter-revolution.

As Lenin said: "It is undialectical, unscientific and theoretically wrong to regard the course of world history as smooth and always in a forward direction without occasional gigantic leaps back." Such reverses and setbacks must be properly understood and correct lessons drawn in order to strengthen the forces of socialism against its enemies during this period of transition.

The main trends of world development in this century, however, testify the correctness of the content of the present epoch since 1917 as that of transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), upholding the banner of Marxism-Leninism against deviations and distortions, calls

upon its ranks to face the challenges posed by the recent developments by firmly adhering to the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism,

It calls upon the ranks to steadfastly struggle against the onslaught of imperialism and counter-revolutionary forces who are today mounting a fierce attack against Marxism-Leninism and the international communist movement.

From a letter