

Reviving Marx and Lenin

- **Imperialism, a Colossus with Feet of Clay**
- **The Collapse of the USSR and the Ideological Crisis**

For pre-conference discussion in preparation for the May 13-14, 2006, conference on “Preparing for the Rebirth of the Global Struggle for Socialism.”
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Preface

The following is submitted as a draft for pre-conference discussion by the party. It is a summary outline limited to two main areas: first, certain aspects of imperialism in the age of the scientific-technological revolution and how they are preparing the groundwork for the next phase in the world struggle for socialism; second, an assessment of the causes of the collapse of the USSR and the importance of understanding its difficulties and achievements for both the ideological and practical struggle for socialism.

Introduction

The destiny of the working class and all of humanity in the foreseeable future ultimately depends upon the thoroughgoing revival on a world scale of revolutionary Marxism and on the victorious struggle for socialism and communism—the only true application of Marxist revolutionary science. Inasmuch as U.S. imperialism is the primary instigator of war and intervention, the wellspring of reaction and oppression, and the bulwark of world capitalism, in no place is it more important to fight for the revival of the struggle for socialism than in the united States. No ruling class poses such an overarching threat to humanity and to the planet as does U.S. monopoly capital.

We are mindful that this assertion is put forward in a period when the working class is on the defensive and revolutionary horizons seem distant.

Fifteen years ago a blanket of reaction fell over the planet after the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe. This terrible setback had been preceded by the opening up of China to foreign and domestic capital and the abandonment by the Chinese government of revolutionary internationalism. The subsequent 9/11 catastrophe gave U.S. imperialism an opening for a world-wide offensive.

The purpose of this document is two-fold. First, to put forward a review and an analysis for discussion and second, in order to encourage the party to strengthen its ideological work as it strives to revive the struggle for socialism in the working-class movement.

The bulk of the material and arguments presented here pertain to the U.S. However, the trends outlined exist in all the imperialist countries, although in different stages of development.

Today, Washington's military offensive is stalled in the cities and towns of Iraq and in the hinterlands of Afghanistan. The U.S. government is facing numerous fronts of political and diplomatic confrontation. The fact is that U.S. imperialism is steadily losing its grip on world events in spite of its "super-power" status—a sign of decline. But, with exceptions, the world movement is still on the defensive and political reaction is still a dominant force, particularly in the imperialist heartland.

One can have no illusions as to the formidable obstacles facing the revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, the fact that the task is formidable does not make it any less necessary or any less urgent. It is an indisputable fact that all economic, social, political and environmental evils of contemporary society are a direct outgrowth of the present-day profit system in its decadent stage, the stage of imperialism.

Socialism is the antithesis of capitalism, its only form of negation. There is no other historically possible resolution of capitalism's fundamental contradictions. The antagonistic social relations created by capitalism weigh oppressively on the vast majority of humanity.

The overriding contradiction governing all of modern society is between, on the one hand, the private ownership of the world's vast means of production by a tiny minority of fabulously wealthy corporate financiers who operate the entire system for profit and, on the other, the highly developed, interdependent, socialized global production process set in motion 24 hours a day by the labor of the world's working class under increasingly onerous conditions.

There are no depths of criminality and barbarism to which the ruling class will not go in order to perpetuate this system of exploitation. There is no act of military aggression, no form of torture, no level of grinding exploitation, no environmental threat to life on the planet that capitalism will reject. From the slave trade, to the holocaust, to the expulsion of whole populations, to annihilating major cities with nuclear bombs, there is nothing that the capitalist class will shrink from in its insatiable quest for profit, its thirst for surplus value, its irresistible drive to accumulate and multiply its capital.

These acts are not simply a matter of personal greed or human nature. While greed and capitalism are mutually reinforcing, it is capitalism that creates greed, not greed that creates capitalism. The maximization of profit through the exploitation of labor power and the pillage of the world's resources is the iron law of capitalism. To put an end to the operation of the laws of capitalism, society must put an end to capitalism itself. And the only significant class in modern society that has both the social and economic power and the deeply rooted historical class interest to end capitalist exploitation is the working class.

The recognition of these fundamental propositions is the theoretical and political starting point for the rebirth of the ideological struggle for socialism.

Period of reaction and seeds of revival

Although political reaction prevails in the imperialist world and in the U.S. in particular, nevertheless, the history of capitalism in the last century is filled with both advances and setbacks for the workers and the oppressed. There have been periods of upsurge and periods of deep reaction. While it is undeniable that the collapse of the USSR transcends in its effects all previous setbacks in the history of the working-class movement, the current period of reaction, like all periods of reaction, contains within itself the seeds of its own dissolution.

The collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe put an end to the first historic phase of the struggle for world socialism. Marxism suffered a great setback in its wake. But Marxism cannot be extinguished and it cannot be suppressed for long because it is the most effective ideological tool with which the exploited and oppressed can conduct their struggle. It expresses openly and in plain language the class truth about the workers' true condition in society and clearly outlines the road to emancipation. Imperialism in the age of the scientific revolution is expanding and deepening exploitation and oppression on an unprecedented scale.

What is referred to as "globalization" is in fact a process that can only be described as the expanded export of capital and the use of cutthroat trade by giant transnational corporations to pile up huge profits at the expense of the people of the world. In short, it is a phase of intensification and widening of the imperialist plunder of the globe. This process of expanded global exploitation, which is proceeding at breakneck speed due to modern high technology, has profound consequences at home and abroad and is rapidly developing the groundwork for the next phase of the world historic struggle for socialism.

Part I - Preparing for Future Struggles

Capitalism is the problem

A cursory sampling of major recent crises and reactionary developments demonstrate that they are driven by the capitalist system. These examples could be multiplied endlessly, but the better-known developments in the U.S. speak for themselves.

Iraq

The war and occupation of Iraq is about oil profits, military-industrial profits, corporate contracts to take over the privatized Iraqi economy and the exploitation of the Iraqi workers. It's about Pentagon bases to expand military and corporate power in the Persian Gulf and the takeover of strategic oil assets to strengthen U.S. military and corporate power all over the world. Thus the Pentagon acts as the military arm of the big capitalists and their profit system.

Katrina

The Katrina crisis is a case of blatant racism and national oppression engineered by the capitalist government. From Bush on down, the authorities neglected a predictable and predicted natural disaster. Once it took place they turned a natural disaster into a social and economic disaster affecting the African American population of New Orleans most of all. The people who did not drown have been dispersed and obstructed from returning by all possible means in order to clear the way to gentrify New Orleans and make it a real estate/tourist boomtown constructed on the ruins of the flood-ravaged African American community. Capitalist developers have taken over the reconstruction of New Orleans and are virtually dictating their plans to the government. The Katrina crisis exposes that the struggle for bourgeois democratic rights is still incomplete under 21st-century capitalism: 140 years after the Civil War, tens of thousands of registered but displaced Black voters are being threatened with disenfran-

chisement in the mayoral election in New Orleans.

Anti-labor assault

A generation of workers is facing an all-out assault by big business to reduce its living standards to poverty or near-poverty levels. Concessions won by labor in previous periods of class struggle are being eradicated wholesale. The bosses are on the offensive and the labor movement is in retreat. Delphi auto parts workers are threatened with mass layoffs, drastic pay cuts, reduced health care and pension benefits, and the tearing up of their union contract under manipulated bankruptcy proceedings in the courts. Delphi is a symbol for the anti-labor offensive under way by global corporate giants such as GM, Ford, Delta Airlines and IBM—all stimulated by the struggle for profits. They want to throw hundreds of thousands of workers out on the street and intensify the exploitation of those who remain. The capitalist class wants to set new, drastically reduced standards of living for the working class as a whole and seeks to chain the workers and the unions to the capitalist doctrine of “competitiveness” and the market.

Anti-immigrant witch-hunt

There is a rising tide of anti-immigrant propaganda and a profusion of bills in Congress calculated to either criminalize undocumented workers or keep them available for low-wage exploitation by U.S. employers with severe restrictions on their rights. This is putting an estimated 12 million workers under the gun.

U.S. corporations keep Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, as well as other areas of the world, underdeveloped. Workers in those countries gravitate towards jobs in the U.S. to support their families because of U.S.-imposed poverty in their homelands.

The fact that undocumented immigrant workers are in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, food services, etc., and bosses make extra profits from their labor, does not stop the capitalist media and politicians from pitting them against U.S. workers and scapegoating them for the hardships being inflicted on workers born in this country. Immigrant workers are caught in a vicious cycle: when they are driven from their homes by imperialist corporate domination and seek the opportunity to be exploited by those same corporations in the U.S., they are then hounded for being here.

Environmental madness

The degradation of the environment is reaching levels so dangerous that if it continues in a straight line, predominant scientific opinion is that it could threaten life on the planet. Global warming, damage to the ozone layer, destruction of the rain forests, ravaging of other pristine habitats, artificial extinction of countless species, seizure of more and more public lands and natural resources for exploitation, the poisoning of the air, land and water with industrial wastes—all these destructive processes are the direct result of profit-seeking corporate activity of one type or another. When the Fortune 500 prepare their financial reports, the protection of the environment is seen as leading to shrinking profits and is considered a cost center. Cost centers are to be minimized in order to boost profits. Wall Street analysts, giant institutional shareholders and financiers, and the collectors of corporate dividends all subordinate any concerns about the environment and the future of humanity and all life to the bottom line. This anti-environmental madness is driven by profit madness. It reveals the very nature of the capitalist class—in the same way as did their willingness to risk and provoke all-out nuclear war in order to destroy socialism during the Cold War period.

Special oppression: divide and rule

Political and ideological reaction is an indispensable part of the capitalist system. The bourgeoisie, a tiny group of billionaires buttressed by armies of corporate officers and

government officials, could not possibly rule over populations of hundreds of millions of workers and maintain their system of exploitation without a highly developed arsenal of time-tested tactics of divide and rule.

Racism, national oppression, sexism, oppression of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, discrimination against the disabled, youth and seniors, the witch-hunt against immigrant workers and the undocumented—these are just some of the tools used to increase their profits through discriminatory wages, working conditions and reduced social spending. But equally important, the bosses use these tools to keep the workers from uniting against their real enemy, the capitalist exploiters.

Racist ideology has been one of the fundamental props of capitalism, from the justification for genocide against the Native nations, to the enslavement of African peoples, to the betrayal of the African-American population after the Civil War by Northern capitalists, to the annexation of northern Mexico, to the importation of Chinese workers to build the railroads. The U.S. has always been and is becoming more and more, with each new wave of immigration, a “prison house of nations.”

Now, along with racism, has come the war against women’s reproductive rights and same-sex marriage. These so-called “cultural issues” are designed to divide the workers and mobilize reaction in defense of patriarchal capitalism. Both homophobia and misogyny are associated historically not only with male dominance but with class domination and male inheritance rights of the ruling classes, dating back to ancient slavery. They have been resuscitated and envenomed by the reactionary imperialist political establishment as an additional ideological prop of the profit system.

All wealth flows to the top

While the bosses create all this division, the wealth of society, the social surplus consisting of the unpaid labor of the working class, keeps flowing to the top of society and away from the bottom, where it was created. It flows to the possessing classes in myriad

channels created by capitalism: corporate profit, credit card debt, rent, loan interest, taxes on the working class, the plunder of the treasury by the banks and corporations. All this represents the continued appropriation of

Socialism the only way out

To overcome these evils, it is the urgent duty of revolutionaries to engage in daily struggles of every kind on every front. These struggles must each be, on the one hand, part of the immediate effort to defend the masses and to improve their overall conditions. But, on the other hand, to be historically effective, they must be carried on consciously as part of the overall effort to undermine the rule of the rich and their profit system. No matter how small or large these struggles may be, whether a neighborhood battle against a hospital closing or a general strike of the working class, they must be directed against capitalism in one way or another. Whether the struggle is in the streets, in the factory, mine, healthcare center or office, whether it is an electoral struggle or open class combat, it must be directed toward the ultimate goal of placing all of society on a new basis, one that does not just mitigate exploitation, oppression and war, but eliminates them altogether. Such a goal can only be achieved by the complete revolutionary destruction of the capitalist social order and the building in its place of the only social system that can replace it, a system based on human need and not profit: the system of socialism.

Ideological rearmament essential to preparing for the struggle

Today the contradictions of capitalism are beginning to emerge more clearly. What is being called “globalization” seems to be reshaping the world economy and class relations more and more according to the prognostications of Marxism. And so we see that alert anti-communist historians and ideologists, posing as Marxists, are making haste to confuse and disorient new generations, who are curious about and tempted by Marxist doctrine.

the surplus value in one form or another. The billionaires thrive while the mass of the population finds it harder and harder, year after year, to make ends meet.

A case in point is a recent statement by the well-known bourgeois historian Eric Hobsbawm, who was described in the British journal the *New Statesman* as a “pre-eminent historian and avowed communist”—yet the article carried an exchange he had with a French banker!

He commented on a recent BBC poll that named Karl Marx the most famous of all philosophers, 15 years after the collapse of the USSR.

“How are we to explain this sudden re-emergence?” asks this so-called “avowed communist.” “First, I think, the end of the official Marxism of the USSR has liberated Marx from the public identification with Leninism in theory, and with the Leninist regimes in practice.”

Because this enemy of Marxism is so alienated from anything resembling the communist movement, he has mouthed shamelessly from on high what others in the movement are ashamed to say—that they want to pursue socialism without having to bear the burden of grappling with the character and fate of the USSR as the first socialist revolution and what it meant for the future of the struggle and of humanity. They want to proceed without having to cope with the legacy of Lenin’s revolutionary intransigence against capitalism and imperialism, his unbending will to make the revolution, and the enormous contributions he made in the struggle to destroy the capitalist order.

Hobsbawm and his ilk want to use the collapse of the USSR as a weapon to disorient the new generation, to teach them how to dabble in Marxism-lite. They want to show how fascinating it is that the world economy is operating according to Marx, but don’t dare, even for a moment, adopt the revolu-

tionary struggle—which is the essence of Marxism. Don't dare to follow in the path of Lenin, because you will wind up with a society that has collapsed and therefore must have been a failed system, etc.

Hobsbawm may not be in the movement, but his thinking is. And it is a primary reason that we must go back to Marx and back to Lenin and examine the USSR.

Back to basics

Such thinkers prey upon the weakened confidence in the revolutionary struggle for socialism that has afflicted many in the Marxist movement, especially in the imperialist countries, and the movement in general since the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent triumphalist, superpower saber-rattling by U.S. imperialism. Many radicals are trying to hold on to a Marxist analysis of capitalism and imperialism, but they shy away from the essential conclusions of Marxism—the necessity of the struggle for the socialist future. There is a general pulling away from historical materialism, the doctrine of the class struggle and the revolutionary prognosis that the contradictions of capitalism lead inevitably to social upheaval that will set the stage for socialist revolution. It is precisely in times of political reaction—when there is demoralization, ideological disarray, loss of direction and loss of confidence—that the Marxist movement must go back to basics and engage in thoroughgoing ideological rearmament. It must fearlessly analyze the contemporary situation—including an analysis of the collapse of the USSR—as an indispensable part of preparing for coming struggles.

Confidence in working class

Above all, the movement that is gravitating towards Marxism must develop confidence in the working class. Not as it is at the moment—still on the defensive, under the influence of capitalist ideology purveyed by the media, the Democratic Party and the upper echelons of the labor movement—but as it will become when its steadily deteriorating conditions and the crisis of capitalism compel it to restore and set free its natural combativeness and become susceptible to revolu-

tionary class consciousness. In short, the movement must regain its confidence in the future of the class struggle and the national liberation struggles as the only road to progress. Without holding firm to class independence of the workers and the oppressed and without focusing on the struggle for socialism as the longer-term perspective, it is inevitable that the movement will gravitate toward some section of the bourgeoisie for salvation. At the moment, that means moving towards the Democratic Party.

Democratic Party and imperialism

The last hundred years of imperialism and the reactionary positions of every single Democratic administration at home and abroad should be a warning to the movement not to fall into that trap. The lesser of two evils is still evil. John Kerry, Bill Clinton, Hillary Rodham Clinton and the like—all are pro-war representatives of U.S. imperialism, of the exploiters and oppressors. They want to administer the capitalist state on behalf of the capitalist class. Right now they are not even engaging in a demagogic appeal to the working class. But even if they did promise the world, they would betray the workers and continue the policy of conquest abroad in one way or another. They are tied to the ruling class not one iota less than are the Republicans. It is finance capital that controls both political parties, that maintains a vice-grip on them, not only through lobbyists but also through thousands of connections—legal, business, social and otherwise.

Liberation of workers can only be done by the workers

To abandon the class struggle as the fundamental means of progress, and socialism as the only road to class liberation, means confining the struggle primarily to its electoral form and keeping it within the framework of capitalism, with the limited aim of slowing down the right wing. But allying with the so-called mainstream of the ruling class is to make the workers dependent on the political machine of their class enemy. It is a tenet of Marxism, based on indisputable historical experience, that the task of liberating the

working class can only be carried out by the working class itself.

Prepare for future struggles

Marxist ideology is the worldview of the working class. Marxist theory generalizes the experience of the workers and the oppressed in the class struggle. The lessons of the past shed light on the present and serve as a guide to the future. Theory is based on the result of hard-won gains and difficult setbacks. Revolutionaries ignore these lessons at their own peril.

Capitalism is ruthlessly creating the material for social explosions. The longer these explosions are postponed, the greater they will be when they come. Rather than despairing about the present passivity and defensiveness of the workers, it is urgent for the movement to recognize that imperialist society is moving in the direction of economic crisis and war, which create the conditions for social upheaval. The danger that the movement should concern itself with is of being overtaken by events, of being swept along during an upsurge of working-class struggle without having a firm political and theoretical grounding, without the iron-clad clarity that Marxism and socialism can offer to the leaders of the workers and the oppressed.

Class struggle grows by leaps

While a revolutionary horizon seems distant socially and the transformations necessary to create a revolutionary situation seem monumental, the social distance does not necessarily translate into a long distance in time. The accumulated pressure of oppression and exploitation exerted down below by decaying capitalism can rapidly accelerate the transformation of the masses: they can, with breathtaking swiftness, break out of the passivity that has lasted for generations. The class struggle follows the general features of social development. It goes through periods of slow, quantitative evolution and then makes sharp breaks, qualitative leaps; in other words, it develops dialectically.

Latin America and breaks in period of reaction

The sweeping revolt against 25 years of neo-liberalism in Latin America is a significant ray of light shining through the long night of reaction that has dominated the international situation. In many instances, this revolt is in a parliamentary, social-democratic phase. But the Venezuelan revolution, led by Hugo Chávez, has been far more aggressive in this revolt. Chávez has brought the masses into the struggle, promoted the Bolivarian, continent-wide anti-imperialist perspective and established an anti-imperialist alliance with Cuba and Fidel Castro. The Venezuelan struggle is distinctive in that Chávez has taken the offensive against the oligarchy and Washington and has declared in favor of socialism—while moving gradually in the direction of setting up a rival power based upon the organized masses. This is an extremely difficult and complex struggle under Venezuelan conditions and many major obstacles are yet to be overcome.

In Bolivia the indigenous masses of peasants and workers carried out two virtual insurrections and drove two presidents from office. The Evo Morales government was lifted to the presidency on this insurrectionary wave. Other revolts are brewing in countries throughout the continent.

Both these political upheavals and the general move to the left in Latin America have revealed once again that revolutionary socialist Cuba is the magnetic pole of the Latin American revolution, to the chagrin of Bush and U.S. imperialism. The steadfastness of Cuba and Fidel in the face of the superpower 90 miles away, and despite the collapse of the USSR, is a profound source of inspiration to anti-imperialist forces in Latin America. The voice of Cuba is being sought and heard more and more as the social crisis deepens and the political situation moves to the left. Cuba is a revolutionary flame still burning bright in the darkness created by the collapse of the USSR. U.S. imperialism has not been able to extinguish that flame in 47 years. Today it is burning brighter than ever, showing the way to the Latin American revolution. The de-

fense of Cuba must be treated as an unbreakable obligation of the movement.

Stirring in France and U.S.

The massive rebellion of North African and sub-Saharan youth in 200 cities in France and the subsequent rebellion against the anti-labor law put forward by the French government are harbingers of things to come. While the present struggles are of a defensive character, they can lead to a new confidence among the workers, not only in France but elsewhere. It is noteworthy that a general strike of civil servants in Britain to defend their retirement benefits took place just days after the demonstrations in France. There have been other workers' demonstrations in Germany and Portugal. Whatever happens in France in the short run, the attempt to push through the proposed anti-labor law was itself a reflection of the underlying crisis of French capitalism and of European capitalism in general.

The recent outpouring of millions of immigrant workers in cities throughout the U.S. is unprecedented in the immigrant rights struggle and caught the entire ruling class by surprise. The surfacing of a vast international working-class army from out of the shadows of U.S. capitalism, demanding legalization and equality of social status, has pushed back the ruling-class political establishment. The task of the movement, particularly the labor movement, is to combat the racist anti-immigrant propaganda by fighting for class solidarity.

This comes at the moment that industrial workers in the U.S. are under attack in the

auto and airlines industries and the Delphi struggle is reaching a critical moment. The attack on the UAW workers is becoming so severe that the prospect of a showdown is in the offing.

International solidarity means building struggle at home

The resistance in Iraq shows the vulnerability of the Pentagon on the ground when facing a determined guerrilla movement. It has sparked a worldwide anti-war movement of unprecedented scope. The movement will become truly effective when it is merged with the class struggle of the workers. It is the workers who are fighting, killing and being killed in a colonial war of occupation, paid for by hundreds of billions of dollars taken from their taxes.

Washington's campaigns against the Palestinians, against Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, the FARC and ELN in Colombia, the New Peoples Army in the Philippines, and on many other fronts, have only yielded resistance. The struggle in Nepal is shaking the foundations of the ancient monarchy.

But the revolutionary movement in this country cannot confine itself to supporting socialism, national liberation and resistance abroad. The most important act of international solidarity with the peoples of the world in the long run is to fan the flames of struggle against the enemy at home: the capitalist ruling class on Wall Street and its government in Washington.

Part II - Imperialism and the Coming Struggle for Socialism

We have seen that in its economic essence imperialism is monopoly capitalism. This in itself determines its place in history, for monopoly that grows out of the soil of free competition, and precisely out of free competition, is the transition from the capitalist system to a higher socio-economic order. [From V.I. Lenin: "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," 1916]

Leninism: Marxism for the age of imperialism

Lenin synonymous with socialist revolution and internationalism

The Marxist movement cannot go forward with ideological and political preparation for the struggle for socialism without taking up Lenin in a serious way. There are currents that speak in the name of Marxism and talk about socialism as an objective. But to carry out that discussion without basing it on Lenin as the point of departure in the 21st century is like talking about the Chinese revolution without Mao Zedong, the African revolution without Amilcar Cabral, or the Latin American revolution without Fidel Castro.

The Party

Lenin is synonymous in working-class history with the proletarian revolution. He was the architect of the first successful socialist revolution; he developed the concept of a highly centralized, disciplined revolutionary combat party—a "party of a new type" based on democratic centralism adapted to work under all conditions and to carry out every type of struggle. He not only built the party but helped it navigate theoretically, strategically and tactically through numerous crises and difficulties, both international and domestic. The Leninist party became the prototype used and adapted by Marxist revolutionaries all over the world.

The state

Lenin advanced and shaped Marxist doctrine for the age of imperialism. He revived the teachings of Marx and Engels on the state—specifically about the state as an organ for the suppression of one class by another and the

necessity for the working class to "break up the old state."

In so doing he combated distortions of Marxism by opportunists promoting the illusory concept of the parliamentary road to socialism—as though the bourgeoisie was somehow going to concede to the popular will expressed in elections, or otherwise, and pass from the scene voluntarily without unleashing violence upon the workers. This was the cardinal lesson to be learned from the massacres of the workers by the bourgeoisie during the June demonstrations in Paris in the revolution of 1848 and in the Paris Commune of 1871. Lenin studied the Paris Commune and assimilated all the lessons Marx derived from that first experience at class power as theoretical preparation for the Russian revolution.

The violent nature of the capitalist ruling class when confronted by any revolutionary threat has been confirmed with the blood of the workers and peasants a thousand times over since the days of Lenin, from the Shanghai massacres of communist workers in 1926 by Chiang Kai-shek, to the Nazi counterrevolutionary atrocities and the holocaust, to apartheid butchery in South Africa, to the massacre of a million communists and progressives in Indonesia in 1965 by CIA-directed generals, to Pinochet's fascist murders in Chile in 1974. When the bourgeoisie and its property are threatened by revolution, there is no legality, no constitution it will honor and no violence it will not commit. The only protection that the working class has is to prepare for the violence of the ruling

class and answer it with organization and revolutionary self-defense.

The national question

Lenin developed the national question and established the right of nations to self-determination as a fundamental premise of Marxism in the age of imperialism, national oppression and wars of national liberation. He amended Marx's slogan, first promulgated in the Communist Manifesto, from "workers of the world unite" to "workers and

Lenin on imperialism

Equally important for understanding the global class struggle today was his groundbreaking analysis of imperialism. In his book "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," Lenin described the transition of capitalism from its competitive stage to its monopoly stage; he distinguished the stages by enumerating the fundamental features of monopoly capitalism.

The book was written in 1916 in the midst of World War I, the first world imperialist war, and of necessity focused on the expansionist inter-imperialist rivalry that led to the war. But Lenin's definition of imperialism is important to reiterate today because he repudiated the false conception that imperialism was a policy or merely expansionary activity. Lenin showed that imperialism was a definite and irreversible stage of capitalist society as a whole.

Monopoly capitalism and rule of finance capital

Through the continuous process of capitalist competition over several centuries, the bosses had used science and technology to increase their exploitation of labor and expand their profits, with each of the capitalists fighting to swallow up their rivals. In the process, capitalism went from the stage of having many competing industries to the creation of giant monopolies and large-scale industry.

Gigantic industrial development required huge quantities of capital. The banks, which centralized and directed all the money capital in society, played the crucial role in bringing

oppressed peoples of the world unite" in accord with the new world reality created by imperialism. These teachings provided the theoretical and political basis for a global alliance between the working class and the struggles of oppressed people for national liberation. His teachings on the national question were also fundamental to the success of the Bolshevik revolution. Over a hundred nationalities that had been oppressed in the tsarist "prison house of nations" joined the revolution on a voluntary basis.

about the centralization of industrial capital and the creation of the monopolies. In the process, they merged with industrial capital. Finance capital became dominant in the imperialist phase of capitalism.

Not only was finance capital the catalyst in the formation of the monopolies but it also played the crucial role of fostering and directing the export of capital abroad—one of the key characteristics of imperialism cited by Lenin.

Imperialist war and redivision of the world

The export of capital abroad went hand in hand with the final carving up of the entire globe by the imperialist powers and the formation of giant cartels for dividing up markets. Lenin documented the territorial division of the globe by the imperialists and showed how imperialist war was the result of the changing relationship of forces between powers struggling to redivide the territories already conquered. German imperialism was a rising power that was overtaking imperial Britain industrially. Yet, because of its late arrival in the struggle for territory, it had few colonies. The older powers, headed by Britain and France, were determined to forestall the expansion of the German ruling class. The tensions broke out into a world conflagration. Rising U.S. imperialism stood behind the scenes and finally threw in its lot against its rival, German imperialism. The war signified the beginning of the general crisis of world capitalism, from which it has never been able to extricate itself.

The export of capital

The phase of monopoly capitalism is distinguished from capitalism's earlier competitive phase by the predominance of the export of capital in the overseas expansion of capitalist exploitation. It is not that the competitive phase of capitalism was not expansionist. On the contrary, the colonial powers chartered state merchant monopolies that forced their commodities upon their colonies. It was competitive mercantile capitalism that plundered and conquered territories for precious monetary metals. Merchants carried on the slave trade to supply the slavocracy in the Caribbean, Latin America and the U.S.

The U.S. ruling class was expansionist long before it entered its imperialist stage, carrying out a war of genocidal extermination against the Native peoples, annexing northern Mexico, contesting with the Spanish and Portuguese empires in Latin America. Competitive capitalism was covered in blood in its quest for profits in the colonial world—through unequal trade and the slave trade. And it was of little consequence to the victims of U.S. expansionism whether they were plundered by old-style competitive capitalism or by monopoly capitalism.

Imperialism, the final stage of capitalism

But the economic analysis of imperialism is crucial to understanding the historical development of capitalism, its limits and its ultimate role in human history as a transition to socialism. Marx and Engels lived during the heyday of competitive capitalism. They thought competitive capitalism, as it developed large-scale industry and an expanded and maturing proletariat, was in its final stage. They believed that industrial capitalism in the 19th century was on the eve of proletarian revolution and socialist transformation.

Although Engels began to study the growth of monopoly toward the end of his life (he died in 1895) both he and Marx (who died in 1883) did not live to see the transformation of competitive capitalism into its opposite, the monopoly stage, and the transformation of the "old" colonialism into modern imperialism.

Bringing Marxism up to date

Lenin brought Marxism up to date in the age of imperialism by giving a materialist explanation of how capitalism postponed its overthrow. He showed that competitive capitalism was not the final stage of capitalism. It had undergone a transformation to a higher stage—the monopoly stage. But at the same time, Lenin also demonstrated that imperialism **was** the final stage of capitalism, that it had exhausted the possibility of evolving into any higher stage and that its only further evolution could be the revolutionary transformation into socialism and the end of private property. He showed that its entire development was laying the basis for world socialism.

The 'Manifesto' and Lenin's 'Imperialism'

Lenin's analysis was made in 1916 during World War I when the working class was suffering greatly and the revolutionary potential of the workers was just below the surface. Capitalism had broken down completely in the sense that the contradictions were so irrepressible that they led to a disastrous world conflagration, in which tens of millions were killed and wounded in a struggle by the imperialists to redivide the world.

When the Bolshevik revolution took power in 1917, it appeared that this was the opening event in the imminent development of the world revolution. The Russian revolution was followed by mass demonstrations and uprisings in Germany and Hungary, as well as mutinies in France. The German and Austro-Hungarian monarchies were toppled. It seemed that Lenin's thesis that imperialism was the "final stage of capitalism" was being confirmed in the living struggle of the moment.

But the overthrow of capitalist imperialism proved to be much more difficult and protracted than was hoped for and anticipated by the revolutionary generation of 1917. This forced the movement to put Lenin's concept into a broader and longer-range historical context. Precisely because Lenin's thesis was formulated just before the outbreak of a revolution that forced the imperialists to end the

war, it was associated with the post-war phase of the struggle.

As for the present-day movement, the collapse of the USSR and the rise of U.S. imperialism have caused the abandonment of Lenin's thesis in many quarters that call themselves Marxist. Leninism is anathema, as is the USSR.

But, in fact, Lenin's thesis on imperialism was not dependent on the immediate events and has universal significance for the struggle for socialism. It should be pointed out that the "Communist Manifesto," like Lenin's "Imperialism," was written in a pre-revolutionary period—on the eve of the revolutions of 1848. It declared that capitalist society had entered the era of the proletarian revolution.

The Manifesto was an analytical document setting out the worldview of the proletariat. It declared that the class struggle was the driving force of history. It explained the evolution of the bourgeoisie under feudalism; how capitalist property relations came into conflict with the feudal property relations of the hereditary landed aristocracy and how the bourgeois revolution destroyed feudalism. Marx traced the development of the capitalist class and its historic antagonist, the working class. He showed that, just as the development of the productive forces under feudalism had led to the bourgeois revolution and the overthrow of the feudal ruling class, the contradictions inherent in bourgeois private property inevitably led to the overthrow of capitalism. And he showed that capitalism inevitably developed the working class—which would become the revolutionary gravedigger of the bourgeoisie.

The Manifesto was a consummate, popular exposition of Marx's historical materialist analysis, but he did it in an agitational style that promoted revolution. It inevitably became associated with the revolution. The 1848 revolution was defeated but the historical significance of the Manifesto was Marx's worldview—independently of the fact that it was trying to promote a revolution that, as both Marx and Engels later recognized, was impossible at the time. That worldview, with

modifications due to the development of imperialism, is as fresh and applicable today as when it was written.

Ninety years of imperialism

In the same way, Lenin's thesis on imperialism is as sound and necessary today as in 1916. Ninety years of imperialism since Lenin made his analysis have confirmed his characterization of it as the highest and final stage of capitalism. Through this past century, capital has multiplied by many magnitudes. The struggle of imperialist capitalism to expand monopoly profits has continued to plague the world with war, as it did at the time of its origin. Militarism is an integral part of imperialism. It took on great momentum in the latter part of the 19th century, with the struggle for naval supremacy. Today, monopoly capital, particular U.S. imperialism, has raised militarism to the point where the Pentagon's nuclear Damocles sword hangs over the heads of humanity.

Monopolies and finance capital have not changed in their essence; they have simply grown stronger, richer and expanded their spheres of dominance. The previously unimagined (in Lenin's time) development of space-age, digital-age productive forces has been accompanied by intense struggle among the monopolies for higher rates of exploitation of labor. Venomous competition among the monopolies has not diminished by one iota and has played out on a wider economic arena, costing tens of millions of workers their jobs, whittling down their standard of living, and creating a worldwide network of sweatshops alongside obscene wealth.

The parasitic character of finance capital has not changed either. It has only multiplied its forms. To stockbrokers and commodity traders have been added hedge fund operators, private equity firms, currency traders, specialized buyout firms, venture capitalists, etc. Parasitism and speculation by financiers gambling with the wealth created through the sweat and blood of the workers and oppressed of the world has not changed since Lenin wrote his analysis. It has only grown in

scope as the means of production and exploitation by imperialism have expanded.

What is new is that the scientific-technological revolution in communications has permitted the millionaire and billionaire parasitic financial speculators to create a global gambling casino that operates at the speed of light. The new technology only increases the instability of the world capitalist system, as demonstrated in the “Asian” economic crisis of 1997-1998 when imperialist finance capital, having rushed into the region financing overproduction of everything from hotels to automobiles, pulled out at lightning speed at

Lenin on imperialist war

War to redivide the world

Lenin noted that a fundamental feature of imperialism was the complete division of the globe into colonies and “spheres of influence,” ushering in a permanent struggle to divide and redivide the globe. Imperialist military conflict over spheres of influence predominated until the end of World War II, which was in many ways a continuation on an expanded scale of World War I. German and Japanese imperialism were decisively defeated and British and French imperialism were exhausted by the war. The question of who would dominate the imperialist camp—which was the issue underlying both world wars—was finally settled when U.S. imperialism emerged as the preeminent imperialist power and took charge of reorganizing its capitalist rivals and the entire capitalist world under its domination.

War between socialist and imperialist camps

The USSR had not only survived the Nazi invasion but went on to defeat the fascist armies, albeit at great cost. When the Chinese Revolution triumphed in 1949, there emerged a socialist camp consisting of almost a billion of the world’s people. Triumphant, nuclear-armed U.S. imperialism put an end to a 50-year period of inter-imperialist war and mobilized the forces of imperialism for an all-out struggle to contain the further expansion of

the first sign of a downturn in production—plunging millions of workers and peasants into unemployment and poverty within a few months.

Finance capital and the stock exchange are still completely interlinked with the giant industrial, retail and service monopolies through interlocking directorates, loans, institutional funds, etc., from Verizon to GM to Exxon. The Enron scandal revealed the little publicized fact that behind the scenes in this historic swindle of the masses were the biggest banks in the U.S., including Citigroup, Chase Morgan, USB, First Boston and others.

socialism and eventually to roll it back and destroy it.

The old driving force of war, the inter-imperialist struggle to redivide the globe, was superseded by the struggle between two class camps representing two irreconcilable social systems—socialism and capitalism. The Cold War, which was in reality a class war, turned into many small hot wars, with the threat of world war always looming in the background under the banner of anti-communism.

War for global re-conquest

With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the irrepressible war drive surfaced as the struggle to reconquer territories lost during the previous era of socialist revolution and national liberation struggles. The bourgeoisie was determined to prevent other countries from breaking away from imperialism. Before the Bolshevik revolution, as Lenin pointed out, almost the entire globe was under the direct rule of one imperialist power or another. Beginning with the creation of the Soviet Union, capitalism lost its sway over one-sixth of the earth’s surface. The geographical sphere of imperialist domination contracted steadily for 75 years, primarily on the Eurasian continent, but also in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. The period after the collapse of the USSR was the first time that imperialism had expanded geo-

graphically since the so-called scramble for Africa at the end of the 19th century.

This is not to say that inter-imperialist warfare is permanently ruled out. Under changed relationships of forces, other imperialists would not hesitate to challenge Washington. The uneven development of the imperialist powers, particularly the growing strength of Germany and Japan in relation to U.S. capitalism, is an additional motivation for the Pentagon to use military force as a way to intimidate its rivals, to show who is boss, and to insure itself the lion's share of the loot—as, for example, in the Yugoslav war.

But, for the foreseeable future, the military dominance of the U.S. ruling class seems unchallengeable in the military sphere, so that inter-imperialist struggle has to be confined to the economic and diplomatic spheres. If the European and Japanese imperialists seek to build up their military forces at the present, it is not for the purposes of challenging the Pentagon militarily but in order to gain some independent leverage to participate in the reconquest of the world without having to rely so heavily on Washington.

'Regime change' from Clinton to Bush

This new orientation, this redirection of the imperialist war drive toward reconquest, did not spring whole from the minds of George W. Bush and the so-called neo-cons. It was first codified under the Clinton administration in relation to Iraq; the term "regime change" was first written into law in 1998. It was then carried out in practice by the Clinton administration with sanctions and bombing against Iraq and a merciless, unprovoked air war against Yugoslavia, the last even semi-independent country in central and southern Europe, which had retained elements of socialism from the era of Tito.

This concept of regime change was expanded by the Bush administration in its National Security Strategy doctrine of September 2002, when it generalized the right of U.S. imperialism to impose "regime change" and to engage in so-called "preemptive warfare." Bush openly targeted Iraq, Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in his

infamous "axis of evil" speech. At the same time, in a less publicized way, the Pentagon was also modernizing its strike force in the Pacific, constructing a theater anti-missile system in the Pacific region. It was building up its bases in Central Asia on the southern flank of Russia and China and redeploying forces from Western Europe to Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

It is worth noting that in March 1992, after the collapse of the USSR and toward the end of the Bush Sr. administration, an internal Defense Department document called the Defense Planning Guidance declared the intention of U.S. imperialism to rule the world and declared that no power or combination of powers should even think about challenging Washington or the Pentagon. It was written by Paul Wolfowitz, at that time deputy to Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and "Scooter" Libby, now under investigation in the Valerie Plame leak. All three men signed off on the document.

Parts of this document were leaked to the New York Times, but the full document has never been made public. It is highly likely, however, that if there had been any reference to "regime change" in the document, that too would have been leaked. Thus, under the following administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush there occurred a significant evolution of the forward strategy doctrine of U.S. imperialism—from that of static rule to one of expansive reconquest, that is, regime change.

The reactionary slogans of the era of reconquest are being fashioned to ensnare the masses in this post-Soviet period: "the war against terrorism," the need to eliminate or prevent "weapons of mass destruction," the campaign to "spread democracy" and "stamp out tyranny," etc., are being taken up by the entire capitalist media and political establishment as general slogans for the time. These slogans were being circulated before 9/11 but took on full force thereafter. Such pejoratives, of course, are all directed against governments of countries that have broken away from imperialism in the last century or

against movements and countries that are fighting for their liberation now. This ideological offensive in the era of reconquest is equivalent to the anti-communist crusade of the Cold War era, with its cries of “godless communism,” etc., which were a smoke-screen for the struggle to whip up prejudice and conceal the class character of the struggle between the two camps of socialism and imperialism.

When the USSR, the German Democratic Republic and Eastern Europe collapsed, imperialism regained access to over one-fifth of the globe. It also had a freer hand in exploiting many bourgeois, semi-independent countries that had leaned on the USSR and the socialist camp for assistance in countering the aggressive attempts at neo-colonial penetration by imperialism. There still remained significant portions of the globe not under the control of imperialism. Washington has since set its sights on the reconquest of that part of the world that retains any form of independence, that poses any obstacle to the advance of monopoly capital.

Thus, while the form of the imperialist war drive has changed over time with the changes in the world situation, and the relationship of forces on a global scale has shifted, the fundamental nature of the war drive as first explained by Lenin, the drive to secure and expand the profits of monopoly capital, the irrepressible drive to capital accumulation, is as true today as it was in his time.

Implications of reconquest for the movement

It is important for the movement to grasp the fact that reconquest is the inevitable and permanent expression of the expansionary process of imperialism in the post-Soviet period. It can take “peaceful,” subversive forms, like the so-called “Green Revolution” in Georgia, the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, and similar processes underway in Uzbekistan and Belarus. But the strength of these subversive efforts rests upon the fact that pro-imperialist, counter-revolutionary bourgeois elements have already made enormous inroads since the collapse of the USSR.

With truly independent countries whose regimes are a product of deep-going bourgeois nationalist revolutions or socialist revolutions, subversive methods have proved insufficient. Twelve years of trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein through sanctions, coups and counter-revolutionary insurrections failed. This failure had nothing to do with any revolutionary qualities of Hussein. On the contrary, within the framework of the mass popular Iraqi revolution of 1958, which ousted British colonialism and its puppet monarchy, he was a reactionary figure. Bourgeois officers in the Iraqi military led the revolution, but it was accomplished in large degree with the support of the popular organizations, the most organized of which was the Iraqi Communist Party.

The revolution asserted Iraqi control over its undeveloped oil fields and eventually nationalized its oil. Iraq passed land reform, curtailed the rights of the feudal landlords, made profoundly progressive decrees advancing the rights of women, and enacted many other socially progressive measures. The revolution laid the basis for national development; as a result, Iraq became the most modern and developed nation in the Middle East.

Within the framework of the revolution, Saddam Hussein and the Ba’ath Party played a key role in reactionary attacks on the Communist Party and insured the rule of the national bourgeoisie. Hussein went to war with Iran shortly after the success of the Iranian revolution and was assisted by Washington, which wanted to see both revolutions destroyed.

But in spite of his reactionary measures in domestic and foreign affairs, Hussein, like so many bourgeois nationalist figures in the era of anti-colonialism, played a dual role in that his rule and that of the Ba’ath Party were based upon maintaining the independence of Iraq from imperialism. His dictatorial regime not only suppressed progressives and revolutionaries, it also suppressed domestic, feudal reactionaries and pro-imperialist elements. (These are the very elements who are now in the Green Zone, fighting over who will gain

the most from the victory of U.S. imperialism, who will be the clients of Washington and the Pentagon, and who will get the most spoils from the overthrow of the Hussein government.)

U.S. imperialism wanted to overthrow Hussein not because he was a reactionary and suppressed the left, not because he was dictatorial. One glance at the reactionary, decrepit feudal-bourgeois monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf oil states shows that Washington has no aversion to absolutist rule when it comes to protecting the interests of Big Oil.

The campaign of vilification of Hussein and the 12-year campaign to topple him or force him back into a neo-colonial position were aimed at taking over Iraq for imperialism. And what kept Hussein afloat, despite all the attempts to overthrow him, was the Iraqi masses. Having lived first under colonialism and then, for a generation, under national independence, they fully understood that, whatever their position on Hussein and the Ba'ath Party, they were dead-set against allowing imperialism to return. They suffered through years of genocidal sanctions and would not submit. They had thrown out the British in 1958 and did not want the U.S. to come back and take the place of their former masters.

It is necessary for the movement in the U.S. to understand the dual character of bourgeois nationalism in the formerly colonial countries, whether they be Iran, Syria, Palestine or any other country. Whatever internal defects exist within those regimes, they must, in the long run, be corrected by the people themselves. Imperialist counter-revolution, whether it comes through war and occupation, subversion or any other means, can only make things a thousand times worse for the masses. It opens them up once again to super-exploitation, robbery of their resources and the rule of finance capital. Nothing could be worse.

Iraq and the ruling class

There are those who say that the U.S. government really wanted to make an accommodation with Hussein. But whether or not

Washington and Wall Street could have made such an arrangement is a moot point. The fact is that the U.S. ruling class got behind the military reconquest when all else failed—and the overthrow of the Hussein government and the return of imperialism has brought nothing but disaster and suffering to the Iraqi people.

The war/occupation in Iraq has been variously described as a plot by Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and the neo-conservatives, as a poorly executed act of superpower arrogance plagued by blunders, as a war for oil, as a war for strategic position in the Persian Gulf, etc. It is all of these things and more.

The war was begun with the willing collaboration of virtually the entire political establishment, mainstream media, government officialdom, and policy planners of U.S. capitalism in both parties. Whether they were reluctant or enthusiastic, whether they were for more inspections or using the United Nations or bringing in Europe, when the time came they all heeded the call of the Bush administration. The only dissenters of any significance from the establishment were in the military, and their reservations were on tactical grounds.

The crisis of the occupation brought about by the resistance has obscured the pre-war plans of the oil companies to divide up Iraq. Forgotten are the early post-war gatherings of corporate representatives at government-sponsored functions where Washington's plans to privatize the entire Iraqi economy were laid out and the lush contracts to be offered were described. The profit interests of the military corporations, the interests of the oil companies, and the positioning of the U.S. military to defend and expand the profits of U.S. transnationals in the Middle East, which brought about the Iraq war, are now all but submerged in the agony over the disaster in Iraq and the unrealized plans of the capitalists.

This policy of reconquest and suppression of independence struggles has enormous implications for the working class and the oppressed world over and, most crucially, for the U.S. working class. The Iraq occupa-

tion has revealed the vulnerability of U.S. imperialism. It has unexpectedly (for the Pentagon) stumbled in its first attempt at the reconquest of that broad swath of territory stretching from Syria on the Mediterranean, through Iraq and across the Persian Gulf to Iran.

In Iraq, the Pentagon has been tied down by a lightly armed but determined anti-colonial resistance, which is itself fragmented. Washington is now in a great dilemma about Iran. The Iranian government, also the product of a profound anti-imperialist revolution, has so far maintained its intransigence in defending its sovereignty, its right to self-determination and to self-defense. And the Syrian government, too, has so far weathered the first U.S.-Israeli instigated storm aimed at “regime change.”

Vietnam and meaning of the Rumsfeld doctrine

Much scorn has been heaped upon the Rumsfeld strategy in Iraq in the wake of Washington’s crisis. In retrospect, the Rumsfeld doctrine in Iraq resulted in a strategic disaster. But it is worthwhile trying to understand and evaluate the doctrine in terms of the new age of reconquest upon which U.S. imperialism is embarking and the problems it confronts. At the same time it is helpful to compare it to the competing so-called Powell doctrine.

The Rumsfeld doctrine was a formulation of his military views in support of the National Security Strategy document released in 2002 and the strategic doctrine of reconquest as made public by Bush. The doctrine was tested in Iraq but is part of a global strategy and plan for “military transformation” promulgated at the outset of the Bush administration. Its essence is to use a combination of high-technology guidance systems, from land, sea, air and space, to coordinate highly lethal, highly accurate strikes that create “shock and awe” to knock out or fatally weaken a regime. It relies heavily on limited ground forces, with an emphasis on highly trained special forces, that can be rapidly deployed across the globe to consummate the conquest.

On the face of it, this doctrine is tailor-made to demonstrate that U.S. imperialism has the capacity to embark on its campaign of reconquest. Rumsfeld’s doctrine consciously tries to overcome the fatally weak point of U.S. imperialism—how to deal with the masses at home and abroad—by concentrating on what he considers to be its strong points, high technology and overwhelming military power.

Rumsfeld lived through the Vietnam era. He saw the determined resistance of the Vietnamese masses under the direction of the revolutionary government of Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam. He also saw growing rebellion in the drafted U.S. Army, the fraying of officers, the mass disaffection of the troops as the war progressed, and the rebellions in the inner cities, along with the social upheaval that the war led to at home.

His doctrine may be delusionary in character but it has a clear purpose from the point of view of imperialism. It is calculated to show that the U.S., using high-tech, high-explosive fire power and limited ground troops, can conquer the world by knocking out regimes that oppose it. It discounts the resistance of the anti-imperialist masses in the targeted countries by dwelling on “shock and awe.” By focusing on a limited number of highly trained special forces, it gets around the military draft and the need to throw millions of workers from the U.S. onto the battlefield to face the fierce resistance of the anti-colonial masses. Its goal is to achieve imperialist conquest abroad while maintaining social stability at home.

Precisely because it attempts to avoid involving the working class *en masse* in major conventional warfare for fear of rebellion, the Rumsfeld doctrine and his program of “military transformation” leads in the direction of “shock and awe” style attacks and even to nuclear adventurism. It is under the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld regime that the concept of “low-yield” nuclear warfare along with conventional warfare has been integrated as an option into Pentagon battle plans. The Bush

administration announced early on that its military doctrine had been formally amended to include a nuclear first strike against both nuclear and non-nuclear countries. Such “low-yield” nuclear weapons, the so-called “bunker busters,” are presently under development.

The Iranian crisis is a case in point. The Pentagon is bogged down in Iraq. The Bush administration and its chief military strategist, Rumsfeld, have been humbled. The great, “all-powerful” colossus, to use Lenin’s term, has been held at bay by the resistance. Rumsfeld and Bush are now in the position of having to restore Washington’s status of invincible superpower. But this cannot be done by an invasion.

Thus, the talk of a nuclear strike on a non-nuclear developing country like Iran, which is not even at war with the U.S. Such a horrific prospect, had it been contemplated during the Soviet era, could never have been uttered in public. It was revealed after the Vietnam War that Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s secretary of state, threatened the Vietnamese with nuclear attack several times during “peace” negotiations. But that fact was never allowed to see the light of day at the time.

Whether the U.S. will actually use the weapons, beyond trying to threaten and intimidate, is not known. But the fact that they are brandishing their nuclear threats is a sign not only of military madness but of desperation and ultimately of strategic weakness in the struggle to reconquer the world.

The Powell doctrine

And what of the so-called Powell doctrine of overwhelming force? Colin Powell is of the Vietnam generation that believes the lesson of that conflict is that Washington should not go to war without overwhelming force that can guarantee victory. Powell has never specified just how the U.S. could have won the war in Vietnam. His doctrine has never been applied to the conquest of an anti-colonial people. It was applied in the first Gulf War of 1991. After 40 days of merciless bombing, the Pentagon, with all its imperialist allies on board, launched a brutal conven-

tional war to drive the Iraqi army from Kuwait. Its victory was a foregone conclusion. The imperialist military coalition, headed by the Pentagon, waged war on an open desert where the Iraqi army was compelled to use outmoded tanks without any anti-aircraft defenses or warplanes—its air force had been destroyed on the ground before the U.S. commenced ground operations. The Iraqi army was confronted by superior firepower from the ground and air.

After the unobstructed hammering of Iraq for 40 days, the application of the “Powell doctrine” was no more challenging than shooting fish in a barrel.

Nevertheless, with all their superior firepower, Powell and Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf were loath to enter Baghdad, even with 500,000 troops. They did not overthrow the Hussein government and there is no evidence whatsoever that the current Powell faction in the military, represented by Gen. Eric Shinseki, would have been any more successful in subduing the Iraqi people with 200,000 troops or more this time around.

It is clear that the Iraqi resistance was planned in advance and was not just the product of Pentagon bungling. Even if it had not been planned, the stifling occupation would soon have generated the resistance among a fiercely anti-colonial people who had had their own revolution, were experienced with arms, and were highly capable of using technology to wage war. The French imperialists had an occupation force of 500,000 troops in Algeria, yet they were forced to withdraw in 1962 after eight years of resistance. As far as the Rumsfeld doctrine and the Powell doctrine are concerned, they are equally delusionary, insofar as they are fashioned to achieve the reconquest of the independent governments of the world by military force.

Imperialism: Colossus with feet of clay

The failure of the Rumsfeld doctrine in the face of the resistance confirms a characterization of imperialism Lenin made during the struggle of the Bolsheviks to hold on to power.

In October 1919, Lenin addressed the progress of the war against the imperialist armies of intervention and the domestic counterrevolutionary forces besieging the revolution on all sides.

Victory in war goes to the side whose people has greater reserves, greater resources of strength and greater endurance.

We have more of all these qualities than the Whites, more than the “all-powerful” Anglo-French imperialism, this colossus with feet of clay. We have more of them because we can draw, and for a long time will continue to draw, more and more deeply upon the workers and working peasants, upon those classes which were oppressed by capitalism and which everywhere form the overwhelming majority of the population....

Our enemies, whether the Russian or the world bourgeoisie, have nothing remotely resembling this reservoir; the ground is more and more giving way under their feet; they are being deserted by ever greater numbers of their former supporters among the workers and peasants. [V.I. Lenin, “Results of Party Week in Moscow and Our Tasks,” Oct. 21, 1919]

It was precisely to minimize the role of the masses that the Rumsfeld doctrine was formulated. It shows that while Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld underestimated the role of the masses, nevertheless their strategy was to do everything militarily and technologically possible to get around the problem of mass resistance at home and in Iraq.

When the smoke clears in Iraq, or perhaps before, the imperialists will have to go back to the drawing board. Washington and the Pentagon are going to have to refashion their military approach.

The question for Leninists to pose to the movement is this: Will the U.S. ruling class, seeing its vulnerability in Iraq and Iran, declare that its ambitions are beyond its resources and retreat into a less belligerent and expansive mode? Or will it move in the direction of military adventurism and crisis?

The British ruling class gradually dismantled its empire under the relentless impact of the

anti-colonial movement and out of exhaustion after two world wars. London adopted a maneuverist strategy on the world arena characteristic of a weakened imperialist power. But it carried out this retreat under the protective cover of the U.S. imperialist superpower, which took over its empire and took responsibility for the defense of the entire imperialist global edifice. British “moderation” (not very “moderate” in its fierce repression of the Irish struggle) was made possible only by Washington’s militarism.

Peace, an interlude between wars

A cardinal tenet of Leninism is that war in the era of imperialism is inevitable. Periods of peace are only interludes of preparation for new wars. The entire bloody history of imperialism has borne out this thesis. The aggressive posture of Democrats and Republicans alike towards the rest of the world is a daily demonstration in the political sphere of how deeply rooted in ruling class society is this tendency towards military adventure, big-power chauvinism and domination.

The dominant forces that drive imperialism, as Lenin pointed out, are the largest and most powerful monopolies, Big Oil, the military-industrial complex, the big transnational banks, etc. It is necessary for Marxists to fortify the movement on this question and to continue to strategize about reaching the workers with an anti-militarist message.

This is especially pertinent to the question of maintaining the independence of the movement and the working class from the imperialist-controlled Democratic Party and any other political movement tied to imperialism. The question of a peaceful evolution of imperialism resolves itself down to the issue of whether capitalism can soften its economic contradictions and function in opposition to the laws of capitalist accumulation and the drive for the maximization of profit. But these are irrepressible forces that drive the ruling class toward war, whether they want it or not.

Expand or die

The struggle to penetrate and reconquer the globe is not a choice by the ruling class, any more than was the struggle to redivide the globe that resulted in two world wars, or the struggle against the socialist camp that threatened thermonuclear war and caused two major wars of imperialist aggression, in Korea and Vietnam. All these wars were driven by the organic need of imperialism to expand or die.

These military adventures were the result of the underlying pressure to find new spheres of investment, raw materials and markets for the dynamically developing productive forces of world capitalism, which long ago outgrew the confines of the nation-state. The pressure for war comes from the inner contradictions of the massive development of productive capacity, which always outstrips the slow development of consumption under capitalism, inevitably resulting in capitalist overproduction, the contraction of capitalist ex-

ploitation, the shrinking of profits and mass unemployment—or depression.

War is a disruptive and potentially destabilizing event for capitalism. Most of the bourgeoisie, save the military-industrial complex, would undoubtedly prefer peace to war. Peace with class oppression is the best possible scenario for the bourgeoisie, for it guarantees the uninterrupted, “peaceful” exploitation of labor and piling up of profits. But even those in the ruling class who prefer peace will go to war if it is the only path available to continue to expand their profits and forestall or divert an economic crisis of capitalist accumulation. It is the ruling class that controls the state. It is the ruling class that will make the decisions on war and peace until the working class takes that state out of their hands and constructs it own. Thus the conception of a more pacific version of U.S. imperialism is a utopian dream, no more based in social science than Bush’s “intelligent design” is based in evolutionary biology.

Imperialism as the final stage of capitalism

Lenin’s characterization of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism has the greatest theoretical and practical significance for subsequent revolutionary generations. This characterization is fundamental to the socialist perspective—its bedrock.

The highest stage is meant in the sense of the final stage. It is final in the sense that once competitive capitalism turned into its opposite—parasitic monopoly capitalism—it was not capable of transformation into any other form of capitalism. There was no possibility of going back to the prior, competitive stage and no possibility of transcending the monopoly stage to some new phase of capitalism.

While monopoly capitalism can undergo quantitative changes, further centralization, growth of larger and larger monopolies, etc., it cannot undergo qualitative transformation from its anarchic, chaotic, crisis-ridden, militaristic, reactionary, oppressive form, driven by the struggle for monopoly profits, new markets, additional wage slaves and parasitic

domination over oppressed countries. The relations of capitalist property perpetuated under imperialism are irreversible and give modern society its fundamental characteristics, so inimical to the interests of the masses and to the very planet.

130 years of monopoly capitalism

In over 130 years, monopoly capitalism has grown and developed enormously but has remained within the narrow framework of the rule by the monopolies, dominated by finance capital, and the system of exploitation based upon wage slavery. Imperialism has exhibited the same reactionary characteristics: war, militarism, intervention, domination of the rich capitalist nations over the oppressed nations, plunder of the world’s resources, racism, chauvinism, ceaselessly expanded export of capital and the routing of wealth into the coffers of the financiers, etc. It has shown not the slightest deviation from these general features. It has only swept more hundreds of millions of peasants and workers under its sway while becoming more decadent, more

parasitic, and creating greater disparities of wealth between nations and between classes.

Imperialism, eve of the socialist revolution

Most importantly, Lenin applied historical materialist analysis to show that imperialism was the transition to socialism. He based himself on the fundamental Marxist premise that capitalism in general prepared the groundwork for socialism because it developed the productivity of labor and created larger and larger means of production, which could only be operated by increasingly widespread networks of workers, organized into an ever more complex division of labor. Thus the bourgeoisie was creating means of production that can only be operated socially, while retaining those means of production as their private property. The greater the socialization of production, the more it comes into conflict with the narrow, strangulating framework of private property.

Lenin applied this analysis to monopoly capitalism, i.e., to imperialism. In a preface to the 1920 edition of his book on this subject, Lenin wrote: “Imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed since 1917 on a world-wide scale.”

Although understandably expressing revolutionary optimism at the time, Lenin did not make his prognosis dependent upon the outcome of immediate events. At the very end of the book, written carefully in 1916 to remain within the legality of the tsarist censor, he had discussed “the changing social relations of production” under monopoly capitalism.

Socialization of production

Lenin gave an illustration of the transformation wrought by monopoly capital in production on a world scale.

When a big enterprise assumes gigantic proportions, and, on the basis of an exact computation of mass data, organizes according to plan the supply of primary raw materials to the extent of two-thirds, or three-fourths, of all that is necessary for tens of millions of people; when the raw materials are transported in a systematic and organized manner to the most suitable

places of production, sometimes situated hundreds or thousands of miles from each other; when a single center directs all the consecutive stages of processing the material right up to the manufacture of numerous varieties of finished articles; when these products are distributed according to a single plan among tens and hundreds of millions of consumers (the marketing of oil in America and Germany by the American oil trust)—then it becomes evident that we have socialization of production, and not mere “interlocking,” that private economic and private property relations constitute a shell which no longer fits its contents, a shell which must inevitably decay if its removal is artificially delayed, a shell which may remain in a state of decay for a fairly long period (if, at the worst, the cure of the opportunist abscess is protracted), but which will inevitably be removed [by the proletarian revolution—f.g].

But the socialization of production alone cannot bring about socialism. It can only prepare the material foundation for socialism and the intensification of the contradictions that lead to revolution. Revolutionary struggle requires not only the objective conditions but also the subjective conditions, the class consciousness of the workers, their will to struggle to get rid of capitalism, and a revolutionary leadership to guide and take responsibility for the struggle.

Lenin understood this full well and made reference to “the opportunist abscess” in this famous paragraph. After having made his economic analysis, Lenin dwelt specifically on the social and political effects of imperialism on the working class.

Opportunism and super profits

He observed that imperialism, with its monopoly profits, not only creates a minority of privileged nations but that “Imperialism has a tendency to create privileged sections also among the workers and to detach them from the broad masses of the proletariat.”

“Obviously,” wrote Lenin, “out of such enormous *super-profits* (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their ‘own country’) it is *possible to bribe* the la-

bor leaders and the upper stratum of the labor aristocracy.” (Emphasis in original.)

Above all, Lenin showed that imperialism tended to create an upper stratum, a relatively privileged and politically dominant minority of the workers, and a lower stratum, the vast majority of the workers. And that was the basis for destroying the class-consciousness and the revolutionary spirit of a significant section of the workers, who accepted not only capitalism but the social patriotism of the ruling class, and who turned their backs on the most numerous and most downtrodden sections of the workers.

It was this upper stratum of the workers that was the social base of the opportunist labor leadership—the leadership loyal to capitalism and imperialism. They were the ones who were recognized by bourgeois society as the official representatives of the workers. They adopted every manner of pro-worker demagoguery but attached themselves to one wing of the bourgeoisie or another, keeping the workers chained to capitalism and obstructing the development of the struggle for socialism. This trend retarded the development of the subjective conditions for revolutionary proletarian class struggle, in spite of the maturity and ripeness of the objective material conditions for socialism.

The history of the class struggle and of the development of imperialism since Lenin’s time is complex and beyond the scope of this document. Suffice it to say that imperialism went into a general crisis in 1914 with the outbreak of the first imperialist war and has never extricated itself from that crisis. The various manifestations of that crisis have brought the world to a permanent state of war and threat of war, intervention, national oppression, political reaction, economic hardship, global impoverishment, environmental devastation, and other expressions of the intense contradictions springing from capitalist property in its monopoly stage and the profit system in general.

But some important new features of imperialism have evolved during the recent period that bear great potential for the class struggle

worldwide and in the imperialist countries, the U.S. in particular.

Early world division of labor

Lenin gave a general description of the extent of the socialization of production and world division of labor in 1916. His description largely prevailed under imperialism until the 1970s. It describes the obtaining of raw materials and agricultural products to be shipped thousands of miles from the oppressed countries to central points of production in the imperialist countries and distributed, all according to central corporate plans, either by a single giant monopoly or a cartel.

The important point to note is the emphasis on the shipping of raw materials and agricultural products from the colonies to production centers in the imperialist countries.

He further described the bosses’ use of monopoly profits for the development of a privileged upper stratum of the working class that separated itself from the mass of poorer workers and became the social support for reactionary labor leaders who misled the workers along lines of collaboration with the bosses and support for imperialism.

This whole system broke down in Europe, and the U.S. to a lesser extent, during the depression of the 1930s, which gave rise to proletarian challenges to capitalism. But for a variety of reasons that cannot be gone into here, fascist reaction triumphed on the continent and the European ruling classes overcame revolutionary threats. Reformism prevailed in the U.S. A new world imperialist war was launched. From the ashes, U.S. imperialism emerged as the organizer and overseer of world capitalism and appropriated a dominant position in the “spheres of influence” of its imperialist rivals.

On this basis the U.S. imperialists were able to garner extraordinary super-profits; they sustained social stability at home by a combination of ideological assault with Cold War anti-communist propaganda while at the same time continuing to accept many of the gains won by the labor struggles of the 1930s.

The Scientific revolution and the anti-labor offensive

While U.S. imperialism was emphasizing its military buildup, the European and Japanese imperialists were busy building up their civilian technology and eating into the world markets of U.S. capitalism. Although Washington was developing continually more advanced weapons systems, its share of the world market declined from 50 percent at the end of World War II to 25 percent by the mid 1970s.

After the Vietnamese defeated French imperialism at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, U.S. imperialism stepped in to take its place in the struggle to hold back the tide of socialism and national liberation in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. All its machinations, followed by 13 years of imperialist war, were unable to defeat the Vietnamese, who were backed by the USSR and China. Washington was finally expelled after having spent close to a trillion dollars and getting not a penny of spoils in return.

The forces of socialism and national liberation were advancing in Portuguese-held Africa, in Ethiopia, and in Yemen.

By the late 1970s the ruling class launched a campaign at home and abroad to recoup its losses out of the hides of the workers and the oppressed. The ruling class started a campaign to restructure capitalist industry, roll back social services, embark on a massive military buildup and in general to reverse the gains that the workers and oppressed had built up since the New Deal, including the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the lesbian and gay movement and all progressive struggles.

This was a multi-pronged assault against all sectors of the working class and the oppressed. A key target was the stronghold of the labor movement: the industrial unions. The scientific-technological revolution was a key weapon in this struggle.

High tech and the military

Much of the early scientific-technological revolution was rooted in the militarization of

U.S. capitalism. The first computers were commissioned by the Pentagon for the purpose of computing the trajectory of shells. Later this technology was handed over to IBM, which was reluctant to develop it at first. The Internet was developed by the Pentagon in order to decentralize the national communications systems so that it could not be easily disabled in a war with the USSR. Satellite communications were developed by the Pentagon for spying and warfare against the USSR and China.

When the Soviet Union inaugurated the space age by launching the first satellite, Sputnik, which orbited the earth in 1957, the Pentagon and the ruling class went into a virtual panic. The Eisenhower administration reorganized the entire educational system in the U.S., from elementary to post-graduate schools. Billions were poured into the sciences. Grants and subsidies were flowing from Washington. Science competitions were organized for students, etc.

This gave great impetus to a new development in monopoly capitalism that, in Lenin's time, had been comparatively undeveloped: the institutionalization on a massive scale of permanent research and development as an integral part of capitalist big business. Lenin noted that parasitic monopoly capitalism, which could also rely on its dominant position in control of the world's resources and markets, could rest on its position of power and tend to inhibit or retard the development of any technical innovation that might undermine a profitable industry.

This feature of imperialism is still operative. For example, the oil monopolies have for generations fought against any and all attempts to develop non-fossil fuel, or renewable energy sources. The auto barons and all their allied industries have fought against the development of mass transportation.

But having said that, the global class struggle against the socialist camp accelerated the development of militarism and the military-industrial complex, which in turn drove the scientific-technological revolution. The generals, being but businessmen in uniform who

become captains of industry when they return to civilian life, made the technology available to the bourgeoisie in order to multiply their exploitation of labor and strengthen their competitive position on the world arena.

High tech, low pay

The bosses embraced the high-tech revolution for its own sake, apart from the military application, because the capitalist economy and their profits were stagnating. The German and Japanese imperialists were getting back onto their feet and cutting deeply into the world market share of the U.S. corporations.

The late Sam Marcy, chairperson and founder of Workers World Party, in a very important book entitled “High Tech, Low Pay: A Marxist Analysis of the Changing Character of the Working Class,” published two decades ago in 1986, analyzed this earlier stage of the high-tech revolution and its effect on the working class in the United States.

In a section devoted to its impact on the unions, he traced the phases of development of the productive forces under capitalism from the manufacturing phase of simple cooperation to the industrial revolution and large-scale machinery, to mass production—what is known as “Fordism” or assembly line production—in the early 20th century. He then described the high-tech phase:

This [mass production] stage has now given way to another phase of technological development. The mass production period, which began with Ford and continued for a period of time after the Second World War, was characterized by expansion. But the current stage, the scientific-technological stage, while continuing some of the earlier tendencies of development, contracts the work force.

Like all previous stages of capitalist development, the current phase is based on the utilization of workers as labor power. But its whole tendency is to diminish the labor force while attempting to increase production. The technological revolution is therefore a quantum jump which requires revolutionary strategy to overcome.

Marx’s studies had shown that the advance of capitalist technology subordinated the workers more and more to the machine, made work more and more monotonous, increased the division of labor and reduced the skills of the workers. The final result was to lower the wages of more and more workers by setting them in competition with one another, all to increase the profits of capital. The high-tech revolution, Marcy showed, has accorded completely with Marx’s analysis.

Marcy noted the decline of manufacturing jobs and the growth of service jobs. But he did not simply talk about them as a bourgeois category. The main aspect of the shift from manufacturing to service was, for the vast majority of workers forced into this change, a shift from high-wage jobs to low-wage jobs.

Changed character of the working class

Marcy promoted various tactics and strategies for the struggle against the anti-labor assault, many of which are completely applicable today. But also important were the sociological observations he made and the political conclusions he drew.

It is this highly significant shift from the higher paid to the lower paid which is dramatically changing the social composition of the working class, greatly increasing the importance of the so-called ethnic composition of the working class, that is, the number of Black, Latin, Asian, women and other oppressed groups, particularly the millions of undocumented workers...

The changed social composition of the working class—both from the point of view of the growing numerical significance of the oppressed and the increasing preponderance of low-wage workers over the higher-paid, more privileged workers—matters “a great deal,” wrote Marcy,

because in terms of political struggle, the objective basis is laid for political leadership to be assumed by the more numerous segment of the class....

While it continues to ravage the living standards of the workers, at the same time it lays the objective basis for the politicization of the workers, for moving in a more

leftward direction and for organization on a broad scale.

The tendency of imperialism to build up the privileged layers of the working class at home, which Lenin had observed, was already in the 1980s beginning to be counteracted by the application of automation, robotization and new industrial processes, mini-mills, etc., as the higher-paid workers in heavy industry—steel, auto, rubber, electric, the bastions of the AFL-CIO—were being undermined by capitalist technology and pushed into the lower-paying service industries or long-term unemployment.

Marcy and other communists were rightfully anticipating that the high-tech assault on the workers would lead to an upsurge of the class struggle. The basis for this prognosis was both subjective and objective. The process of pauperization of the working class would project the more militant sections of the workers forward, while the increase in the productivity of labor would intensify capitalist overproduction and accelerate an economic crisis.

Collapse of USSR and extension of the high-tech revolution

However, the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe and the opening up of China to capitalist investment served as powerful counterweights to an upsurge. From the political point of view, imperialism in general and U.S. imperialism in particular, as the principal adversary of the USSR and socialism, no longer had to contend with a rival social system. The ruling class could drop all pretense of being for the people, of being against racism and oppression, and of allowing labor a “seat at the table.” The demise of the USSR, in addition to demoralizing militants in the labor movement and the movement in general, removed all inhibitions of the capitalist establishment and strengthened the right-wing assault.

President Clinton teamed up with the Republicans to swell the capitalist treasury by destroying the welfare system, which had originated in the New Deal, plunging millions into deeper poverty—mostly women and their

children. Clinton and Newt Gingrich teamed up again in a crucial bloc to pass NAFTA (which was first proposed by Reagan), deepening the attack on the workers in the U.S. and Canada and on the workers and peasants of Mexico.

Global runaway shops: the off-shoring and outsourcing revolution

The growing division of labor in the production process allowed its segmentation on a world basis. Commodities—everything from Boeing 737s to amusement park equipment to Barbie dolls—were now being produced in what the bourgeoisie calls “global production networks” and “global value chains.” Labor power was drawn into the process of expanded capitalist exploitation and super-exploitation from around the globe and distributed in such a way as to squeeze the most surplus value out of a growing, low-wage global workforce.

Off-shoring (moving to low-wage countries to set up industries that had previously paid high or even moderate wages in the imperialist countries) and outsourcing (contracting out what were high-wage jobs to contractors in low-wage countries) is gathering momentum in the board rooms of corporations.

This is what the labor movement used to call “runaway shops,” which fled to either break up or prevent unionization. For example, the unionized textile and shoe industries in New England fled to non-union, low-wage states in the South. But with the opportunity for even lower wages, these capitalists, based on the high-tech revolution, have now fled abroad to Asia, the Caribbean, Central America and elsewhere to escape from even the low wages of the southern United States.

The early phase of off-shoring and outsourcing based upon the new technology was aimed principally at manufacturing. But while the war against manufacturing continues, the outsourcing and off-shoring of digitalization and communications technology is rapidly spreading to the service industry. Call centers and computer programming are the most widely known examples of this process.

But now in addition, research and development, engineering, much so-called “back office” work in industrial companies, the insurance, financial and other services are all eligible to be moved. Everything from reading x-rays to dental laboratory work, i.e., virtually every type of job that can be shipped out or digitalized and that does not require person-to-person contact, is either already being outsourced or its outsourcing is being contemplated. By one estimate, somewhere in the vicinity of 14 million service jobs in the U.S. are eligible for being moved overseas.

This has been accompanied by a revolution in communications—satellites, cell phones, fiber optics; in transportation—giant freighters powered by powerful gas turbine engines, jumbo cargo jets, automated ports and containerization; and in sophisticated servers and databases. The export of capital that Lenin observed as being so prominent a feature of imperialism has taken giant leaps forward as a result of these new expanded opportunities for exploitation and super-profits. Each monopolist grouping must pursue this course in the struggle for profit, lest it be overtaken and destroyed by its rivals.

Right-wing turn in capitalist state part of anti-labor offensive

This development was completely integrated with and strengthened by an historic right-wing reorientation of the capitalist state, beginning at the end of the Carter administration and taking on a full head of steam under Reagan. The bosses went sharply and ruthlessly from a policy of class compromise, forced upon them during the upsurge of the thirties and continued after the war, to an aggressive policy of rolling back all social and economic gains of the workers.

President Jimmy Carter began the right-wing turn with major cuts in welfare, a military build-up, and his infamous statement that “Life is unfair,” referring to the denial of federal funds to poor women for abortions. The new regime was dramatized by the planned ambush to break up the air traffic controllers’ union, PATCO. The PATCO attack, which was carried out by Reagan, had been planned

under Carter. Reagan cut social services by \$750 billion, cut taxes for the rich by an equal amount, and began a \$2 trillion military build-up, the so-called “full court press” against the USSR. He also inaugurated the policy of neoliberalism abroad, while in fact carrying out the same neoliberal austerity programs and removal of obstacles to capital at home.

The anti-labor offensive has been carried out by Republican and Democratic administrations for almost three decades now. It is still going strong. Witness the latest assault on the UAW and the airlines unions. And it has been greatly strengthened by the global reorganization of capitalism under the impact of the scientific-technological revolution.

Export of capital, high tech, and the working class today

This new stage of high-tech reorganization is profoundly significant for the class struggle in the U.S. and other imperialist countries, along the very lines that Marcy indicated in his book “High Tech, Low Pay.” The new reorganization of capitalist manufacturing and services on a global basis has allowed imperialism access to a vast reservoir of labor in India, China, the ASEAN countries, Latin America, the Caribbean, parts of Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and even low-wage parts of Western Europe.

The initial effect of this development upon the proletariat of the U.S., Europe and Japan, is to set them in direct competition, job for job, with workers being super-exploited on a neo-colonial level. In the past era of imperialism, when colonial and neo-colonial labor was largely restricted to mining, plantations and transport—that is, to supplying raw materials and agricultural products to the imperialist centers for manufacturing, processing and distribution—it was impossible for the monopolies to set up direct competition in manufacturing, let alone services, between the workers in “their own countries,” as Lenin put it, and their colonial wage slaves. The productive process had to reach the level of development at which, for example, low-wage workers in Brazil could be employed to

assemble a dashboard that could then be shipped to Detroit to be placed in a “kit” of subassemblies containing most or all the parts of the car, and then shipped to China for final assembly and sale. This is what the high-tech revolution has wrought. It has changed everything for the workers of the world.

The bosses, once having seen the profit possibilities inherent in their technology, have plunged ahead at breakneck speed to develop and spread it to every facility and process in every crevice of the globe possible. It has detonated a new wave of intense competition among the giant monopolies for profit advantage, with the goal of further intensifying the exploitation of the working class everywhere.

The inevitable effect of this process is to further lower wages in the U.S. and the imperialist countries in general. Wages for most workers in the U.S. have been either stagnant or declining relative to inflation for almost three decades now. With each new recession it is harder and harder for the high-tech, offshoring, outsourcing capitalist economy to absorb labor power and create jobs. And each boom ends with greater economic inequality.

While service jobs are being outsourced in increasing numbers, manufacturing jobs are still being destroyed by high tech. One consequence of the destruction of union manufacturing jobs is the intensification of national oppression. It has been shown that one of the principal means for African American workers to lift themselves up out of poverty was through semi-skilled industrial jobs. The decline in auto, steel, rubber and other industrial sectors is taking a disproportionately heavy toll on Black workers.

The increasing proportion of women in the workforce is a direct result of the lowering of wages for jobs of all sorts. The trend is fed not only by the increased number of jobs open to women as a result of high tech but also because more families need a minimum of two wage earners just to make ends meet. Furthermore, the feminization of the workforce on a worldwide scale is growing as the bosses set up their international production networks, many of which include sweat-

shops. The struggle for women’s rights and the class struggle are bound to reinforce each other and give a new energy to the global class struggle.

Imperialism without colonies

This new phase of imperialism, however, has another side that is highly significant and overlooked in the West. It pertains to so-called “neo-liberalism.”

The development of neo-colonialism as a form of imperialism without colonies was made prominent by Kwame Nkrumah, the late president of Ghana, who was overthrown in a military coup in 1966 that many suspected was carried out by the CIA. Nkrumah was a radical leader of the anti-colonial movement, an ardent anti-imperialist and an advocate of African unity in the form of Pan Africanism. One of his most renowned works, published in 1965, was entitled “Neo-Colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism.”

In the introduction to this work, which was an important contribution to bringing Lenin’s imperialism up to date, Nkrumah stated:

The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed—Egypt in the 19th century is an example—into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished. It still constitutes an African problem, but it is everywhere in retreat. Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism.

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside.

This was written in the era of decolonization, when the imperialists were trying to fly under

the radar and hold on to influence in the dozens of former colonies that were being formally declared independent and were joining the United Nations. The old colonial powers made a strategic political retreat in the face of the post-war anti-colonial wave. This retreat was hastened by the triumph of the Chinese Revolution; the armed struggles in Korea, Algeria, Vietnam and Cuba, and the national-ist uprisings in Egypt, Iraq and other places.

Seen in this light, what is today called neo-liberalism is in fact an aggressive form of neo-colonialism, in which the underdeveloped countries of the world are forced into becoming platforms for world capitalist production by the monopolies, suppliers of cheap labor and havens for investments by finance capital of all types.

The IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization are the enforcers of neo-colonialism, the battering rams that break down all obstacles to the unobstructed penetration of imperialist capital investment and commerce by forcing countries to agree to surrender their economic sovereignty. Under neo-colonialism the dependent regimes become tax collectors for the big banks and yield up the type of super-profits that Lenin referred to when describing the export of finance capital during the earlier stage of imperialism and direct colonial rule. Nkrumah's early description of countries that "have all the trappings of international sovereignty" but are "directed from outside" is as widely applicable now as it was then.

The neo-liberal destruction of all barriers to investment and trade is the political-legal foundation for the high-tech reorganization of capitalist production by the transnational corporations and the banks. But while this reorganization of the export of capital has assisted in disorganizing the workers in the imperialist countries, it is destined to have the opposite effect in the underdeveloped, the neo-colonial and oppressed countries.

Indeed, this new phase of imperialism has another side to which the progressive and left-wing sectors of the labor movement must pay the closest attention. It helps the proletar-

iat in the low-wage countries to develop numerically and socially, and it helps them become cohesive as a class. It helps those drawn into the workforce to escape unemployment and rural poverty and puts them in a position to organize as workers. The newly developed proletariat is most susceptible to class consciousness and militancy once it gets organized. (The newly proletarianized peasantry was the base of the Russian Revolution and the vanguard of the Chinese Revolution.)

This capitalist process is bound to improve the workers' level of organization and their ability to carry on the class struggle. The class struggle will enable them to raise their wages and improve their working conditions and become a leading force in the struggle against imperialism. Hundreds of millions of workers are being drawn into capitalist production and the proletariat is growing numerically on a world scale. This is the inevitable outcome of the expansion of capital and it is an objectively favorable development for the future of the global class struggle and for world socialism.

On the other hand, it will further level the wages of the upper strata of the working class in the imperialist countries and in the U.S. in particular, where the globalization process of capital investment is pronounced, along with Germany and Japan.

For example, to understand the crisis for U.S. autoworkers and auto parts workers and how the reorganization is impacting on the UAW, one should know that the Ford Motor Co. has 2,000 parts suppliers spread across 17 low-wage countries. GM has hundreds also. In the early 1990s, by contrast, GM and Ford each had three plants in low-wage countries: Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Poland. By the end of the 1990s, GM had 11 plants and Ford had eight in eight different countries in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. While GM is laying off in the U.S., it is hiring in South Korea and China.

A new feature of imperialism

Lenin's imperialism must be examined anew in light of this latest phase of the scientific-technological revolution and its impact on

trends in the working class. The tendency to create relative privilege among some sectors of the working class, as Lenin pointed out in 1916, certainly still applies. But alongside it a new tendency has grown up, the tendency to destroy privilege among the upper stratum of the workers. At present, this latter tendency is outstripping the former.

In other words, the fallout from the export of capital by the industrial-financial oligarchy that rules imperialism has turned into its opposite. It is still the fundamental source of fabulous super-profits, but in the course of accumulating those profits, by the manner in which finance capital has reorganized world capitalist production, it is now leveling downward the wages and standard of living of the proletariat in the imperialist countries. Instead of fortifying social stability and class peace at home, it is reinforcing the tendency toward the breakup of stability and a renewal of class warfare that was inherent in high tech in the first place.

What began as a technologically based restructuring of industry, largely within national or regional boundaries of the imperialist countries in order to destroy high-wage occupations, has now spread internationally. It has expanded the most ruthless forms of capitalist exploitation into every corner of the globe and is also expanding the proletariat worldwide. This will compel the working class to struggle for its own liberation.

The more finance capital develops the productive forces and the more it socializes production, bringing larger groups of workers into connection with one another on an international scale, the more it also lays the basis for international solidarity as the antidote to the vicious competition among workers—and the more the system of production comes into conflict with private ownership.

Being determines consciousness

Imperialism is bringing the objective material conditions for socialism to greater and greater stages of preparation. The subjective conditions, the consciousness of the workers, is sure to follow. It is a fundamental tenet of

Marxist philosophy that being determines consciousness.

The historic tendency of the capitalist class is to drive the level of the working class down toward subsistence level. The workers in this country fought to live above subsistence level in the 1930s and they made great progress through their own sacrifices. At the present time, the ruling class is trying to drive them back down toward the subsistence level. The more the bourgeoisie presses in this direction, the more it will become not only possible but inevitable that the workers will be able to see their true class position as wage slaves irreconcilably opposed to capitalism. This will be the foundation for the struggle for socialism.

In the struggle for socialism, in the struggle to reach the highest level of consciousness, the working class movement must go through stages. The present stage of imperialism is driving in the direction of social upheaval as it uses its state, its political machine and its technology to level the wages of the working class down. Thereby it creates the basis for a revival of consciousness.

Marcy suggested an intermediary phase in the struggle for socialism that could usefully be adopted today by revolutionary communists.

Up until now, when the word movement was used, it could mean either the Black movement, the Latino movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the lesbian and gay movement or the women's movement. But the term seldom if ever referred to the working class movement. By and large the progressive movement as a whole was more or less separate from the working class.

Now, however, the change in the social composition of the working class lays the objective basis for a movement of the working class itself, of which these movements will become so many constituent parts.

When we speak of the women's movement or the anti-war movement or the Black movement as part of the working class movement, it does not mean they won't have an independent character. Of course

they will. But they will be part of the working class movement because it will have come alive as the fundamental class in society, which alone can weld these movements together in a genuine anti-capitalist and progressive struggle, a struggle both for democratic rights and for socialism.

The change in consciousness which has so long been delayed could not have come earlier merely as a result of episodic turns in the capitalist cycle. But it is bound to come as the result of deep-seated, profound changes in the social composition of the working class. ["High Tech, Low Pay," Chapter 4]

It is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that the development of the productive forces is what creates new classes, destroys old classes and changes relations within existing classes. Right now, the high-tech revolution at its present level of development is precisely one of those deep-seated changes Marcy was referring to. It is reshaping the working class and relations within the working class in a direction that will clear the way for a leftward development of militant, anti-capitalist united struggle and a revival of the revolutionary struggle for socialism.

Part III - Marxism and the Ideological Crisis

Collapse of the USSR and abandonment of socialist perspective

Despite the present dominance of capital in all political, social and economic spheres in the imperialist countries, there is no question of the reemergence of the class struggle. The revival of the class struggle and social upheaval is as certain as the future of intensified exploitation and crisis under capitalism. All the accumulating economic and demographic data available to the general public through the capitalist media confirm the Marxist prognosis of impending crisis. It is impossible to tell at what stage capitalism is on the road to that crisis. It is impossible to tell whether or not the ruling class will turn to an escalated war crisis before it arrives at an economic crisis. What is clear is that the discernable trends in the capitalist economic system, i.e., the ruthless orientation of the ruling class to decimate previous concessions to the working class and the oppressed as well as the increasing propensity towards military adventure, both lead in the direction of social upheaval and thus give additional confirmation to Marxist theory. We will come back to this later.

Overcoming ideological crisis is key

For the moment, let us concentrate on the ideological problem—i.e., overcoming the ideological crisis—which is the fundamental historic problem to be tackled in anticipation of the future struggles. Nothing could be more crucial for the ultimate destiny of the movement and of the workers' struggle than the revival of revolutionary Marxism. Without it, bourgeois ideology and bourgeois politics in one form or another—social democracy or reformism of some type, military authoritarianism or fascism—will allow the ruling class to navigate their crisis and survive the storms that must surely come.

Ideological deterioration longstanding

The revision of Marxism in the international communist movement, particularly in the U.S., Europe and Japan, occurred long before the period leading up to the collapse of the USSR. The ability of capitalism in Europe to revive itself after the Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent victory of fascism had a deleterious influence on the Soviet leadership and the communist parties of the world. After the victory of Hitler, the communist parties largely abandoned the struggle for the socialist revolution and confined themselves to the struggle against fascism and the right-wing and for the preservation of capitalist democracy.

Removing socialist revolution from the immediate agenda was a fundamental revision of Marxism. It was a retreat to reformism.

This orientation was predominant in the world communist movement, save for the period when it was challenged by the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong in the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

The complexities and evolution of the struggle between China and the USSR require an extended treatment and we will touch upon it later. For present purposes it is important to emphasize that the Soviet leadership both collaborated with and competed with imperialism (although on a pragmatic rather than a revolutionary basis) in the struggle between socialism and capitalism on the world arena.

But whatever their policy, the Soviet leaders were the guardians and administrators of the most powerful socialist country. As long as they continued to defend socialism and give assistance to the world struggle, they could never escape the implacable class hostility of the imperialists in the global struggle be-

tween the two class camps. No matter how many times they promoted disarmament and appealed for world peace, no matter how many times they offered to destroy all their nuclear weapons if the West would destroy theirs, they could never make a dent in the aggressive militarism of the Pentagon and the anti-Sovietism of Washington and Wall Street. If there were brief periods of “détente,” they were always in the nature of imperialist maneuvers that would easily be discarded for a return to open hostility.

All the communist parties that followed the policies of the Soviet CP were, like the Soviet CP itself, in a contradictory position with regard to the imperialist bourgeoisie. Just as the Soviet leadership both collaborated with and competed with imperialism, these CPs had a conciliatory reformist attitude towards their own bourgeoisies at home and weak foreign policies in general. But as representatives of the ranks of communist and pro-communist sections of the working class, and as allies of the USSR, they could never escape the hostility of their own ruling classes. Furthermore, their fundamental connection to the world socialist camp remained precisely in their commitment to defend the USSR, which was perpetually confronted by imperialism during various crises in the global class war against socialism. The defense of the USSR was their remaining, much-diluted connection to the Bolshevik revolution, even though the revolutionary legacy of Leninism had long ago been abandoned.

They might have carried out this defense in a pacifist or other non-revolutionary way. As followers of the Soviet leadership they engaged in apologetics for false policies. But at the same time they had to stand up to vicious, unremitting bourgeois and social democratic red-baiting during anti-Soviet campaigns. The defense of the USSR against imperialism became a world dividing line between those allied with the socialist camp in some way and those who lined up with imperialism in an anti-Soviet crisis.

Eurocommunism

By the 1970s this tension between right-wing reformist politics and defense of the socialist camp came to a head in the three largest European CPs—in Italy, France and Spain. The leadership of the Spanish CP propounded the concept of Eurocommunism, an alliance of the European CPs that would no longer have to defend the USSR. The Italian CP called for an “historic compromise” between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and for entering into the bourgeois government. While all three parties moved sharply to the right, the Italian and Spanish CPs openly abandoned their defense of the socialist camp and turned towards anti-Sovietism. This was a final and complete rupture of their last connection to communism and a defection to imperialism.

The evolution of this development and its significance for the working class movement was analyzed and elaborated in the very important compilation of articles by Sam Marcy entitled “Eurocommunism: A New Form of Reformism,” written in 1975-1977 and published in 1978.

The basic significance of this development was “the transformation of the CPs from social reformist parties into social chauvinist parties with an anti-Soviet orientation. This is what is new. This is what is truly alarming.”

Marcy described the immediate events leading up to this historic shift to the right and then put it in its broader context:

It is the fierce and unrelenting pressure of [U.S.] imperialism in full collaboration with the European ruling class to enlist all sections of the population in an anti-communist crusade against the Soviet Union. This is the most important, the key central fact of the contemporary world struggle.

He pointed out that Foreign Affairs, a central organ of ruling class strategic thought, “raised the perspective of ‘the exporting of what has come to be known as Eurocommunism *from West to East*, signifying a historic shift in the direction of world communism.’ [Their emphasis.] By this is meant,” contin-

ued Marcy, “the export by the imperialists and their willing tools of counter-revolutionary theories and influence into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.”

Gorbachev intensifies the crisis

It was only a decade later in 1985 that this current did move from “West to East” and surfaced dramatically in the Soviet Union with the coming of the regime of Mikhail Gorbachev. In effect, Gorbachev abandoned the world socialist perspective and began the demolition of socialism in the USSR under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (reconstruction). Instead of “openness” for proletarian democracy and “reconstruction” of socialist industry, his domestic policies gave the green light to the nascent bourgeoisie in politics and economics. He and the grouping of technocrats and bourgeois-oriented financial experts around him adopted a foreign policy version of the Italian CP’s “historic compromise,” which was really a codeword for surrender. Full-scale collaboration with imperialism was their fundamental orientation. Gorbachev agreed to allow the imperialists a free hand in Eastern Europe and offered to not only deepen collaboration with imperialism, but, most importantly, to end the competition between socialism and capitalism—that is, abandon the support for socialist countries and national liberation movements and disavow the world socialist perspective. This, of course, led to the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe.

Gorbachev, backed by a new bourgeois social layer, turned out to be a transitional figure on the road to capitalist counter-revolution. He began to break down the monopoly on foreign trade, opened up the right to exploit labor, began to undermine the planned economy by putting enterprises on a profit-making basis, denounced “wage leveling” and increased the salary gap between the lower-paid workers and the higher-paid, even further rewarding the already privileged managers and the technical and scientific intelligentsia. In short, he made an open assault on

the fundamental institutions of the socialist economy, using a distortion and misapplication of Lenin’s New Economic Policy as a cover.

This threw the world movement into confusion, creating ideological chaos and further splits to the right.

The great Chinese socialist revolution had exhausted its revolutionary momentum, both internally and on the world arena. The left had been defeated. The Deng Xiaoping leadership, which was committed to market reforms, had taken over. Thus there was no revolutionary ideological alternative for the broad communist and socialist movement.

Collapse precipitates broad retreat

The collapse of the USSR and the emergence of triumphal imperialism precipitated the abandonment of the socialist perspective and of Marxism on a broad front. The USSR was the embodiment of astounding achievements of socialist construction, science and social welfare for the workers. At the same time, the very leaders who presided over socialist construction had an inglorious record that included the abandonment of fundamental socialist norms of proletarian internationalism in foreign policy and proletarian democracy in domestic policy. It was a contradictory phenomenon, but nevertheless most class-conscious workers, revolutionaries and progressives, whether they adhered to the line of the Soviet leaders or were opposed to it, all took the permanence of the USSR for granted and regarded it as the material fortress of socialism, the most durable attempt to build socialism in the world, with all its errors, defects and deficiencies. Even those in the movement who had vilified the USSR and declared that capitalist counter-revolution had occurred long ago, either as far back as Kronstadt in 1921 or with the advent of Stalin or with the ascendancy of Khrushchev in 1956, were in shock when the real capitalist counter-revolution came.

Marxism and the collapse

Does collapse invalidate Marxism and socialism?

The fundamental question is whether or not this historic setback refutes or invalidates the science of Marxism and all its revolutionary implications and prognostications. Do these setbacks demand a fundamental modification of the revolutionary socialist perspective in its classical Marxist form?

In the struggle to revive the revolutionary socialist perspective, it is necessary to deal with Marxism, with Leninism and with the question of the meaning of the collapse of the USSR. We intend to show that the collapse of the USSR is in no way a disqualification of socialism, nor was it the result of flaws in socialism. It does not require any revision of or abandonment of Marx—or of Lenin, who developed Marxism for the age of imperialism.

Marxism—the science of society

With respect to Marxist theory in general, Marx put the study of society on a scientific basis. He uncovered the laws of social development and studied in-depth the laws of capitalism. He worked in the middle of the 19th century, yet his works are the basis for understanding all subsequent development of modern society up until today. Indeed, the capitalist world economy, with its anarchy of production, overproduction and race to develop the means of production, all with the exploitation of labor power as its driving force, operates today in much the same manner as that described in the “Communist Manifesto” and subsequently analyzed in “Capital.”

No bourgeois theorist of the 19th century, or 20th for that matter, has either refuted Marx or given any effective alternative theory. Before the collapse of the USSR, bourgeois economists and political scientists were reduced to vulgarization and vilification of Marx as life confirmed his ideas. They would go silent every time their economy went into a periodic crisis of overproduction, creating havoc for millions of workers. It would be the

height of folly to abandon such a powerful, explanatory theory—on purely scientific grounds alone.

Marxism a tool for liberation of a billion people

But more to the point, Marxist theory is a revolutionary science of the working class. Implemented in practice by revolutionary leaders like Lenin, Mao, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Agostinho Neto, Amilcar Cabral, Samora Machel and others, along with millions of their followers, Marxism was a guiding light in the liberation of a billion workers and peasants from capitalist wage slavery and imperialism in the 20th century. What is more, the anti-imperialist spirit of Marxism and Leninism inspired many more millions who threw off the yoke of colonialism and achieved national independence.

Before the Bolshevik revolution, almost every square mile of the planet was directly under the domination of one imperialist power or another. Capitalist wage slavery and colonial super-exploitation were evils that afflicted most of the world’s population. The socialist revolutions of China, Korea and Vietnam contributed directly to the liberation of what was then one-fourth of the human race.

These great historic accomplishments, whatever setbacks have occurred, should be cause enough to fight tirelessly to hold onto revolutionary Marxism and to fight for its revival.

An historic setback, not defeat of system

What occurred in the USSR and Eastern Europe constituted grave and historic setbacks to the cause of socialism, the workers and the oppressed all over the world. But these setbacks must be understood for what they represent qualitatively—for what they are and what they are not. They were defeats in the class struggle between two hostile and irreconcilable class camps. The defeats resulted in a drastic change in the relationship of forces between the workers and the op-

pressed peoples, on the one hand, and imperialism on the other.

Marxism and the socialist perspective do not anywhere state or even imply that such defeats cannot take place. These defeats are not in any way in contradiction to Marxist theory or historical experience. The “Communist Manifesto” opens by stating that the driving force of history is the class struggle. Nowhere does it posit the victory of socialism and communism worldwide on a utopian conception that there will be no great and even historic setbacks along the road. On the contrary, only Marxism itself can scientifically explain those defeats and draw the necessary lessons from them.

Collapse of the Second International

In 1914, on the eve of the first great inter-imperialist war, almost the entire leadership of the European socialist movement in the Second International supported the war efforts of their own imperialist powers. These socialist leaders thus betrayed their pledge to oppose their own ruling classes and to turn the war into a civil war for proletarian revolution.

It was a stunning collapse of the leadership of a mighty working class socialist movement

Imperialism and the collapse of the USSR

Peaceful collapse of USSR and bourgeois distortions

What made the collapse of the USSR such a great ideological setback for Marxism was that it took place without an internal struggle by the workers or any discernable assault by imperialism. If the counter-revolution had triumphed by a civil war, openly fomented and backed by an invasion, and the USSR had perished in battle after resistance by the workers, as happened with the Paris Commune of 1871, the effect on the world struggle would have been entirely different.

But the collapse without a battle by the workers to defend the socialist system against capitalist counter-revolution opened the floodgates to bourgeois ideologists and propagandists to preach the end of socialism

built up over a period of 50 years of struggle—comparable in impact at the time to the collapse of the USSR. It suddenly left millions of workers without leadership in the midst of a war crisis and at the mercy of their respective ruling classes, who plunged them into fire and blood. Tens of millions were killed and maimed before revolution and rebellion put an end to the war. Polemics by Lenin documented the historic magnitude of this betrayal. He, together with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg of the German Social Democratic Party and the leaders of the Serbian socialist party, not only opposed the war but also called for the defeat of their own ruling classes.

The working class movement was rescued from this historic setback by the Bolshevik revolution three years later, which turned the entire international situation around from disaster to revolutionary upsurge. In the wake of the revolution, the collapse seemed to fade because its effects were overcome by subsequent events. But it is a demonstration that setbacks of the greatest magnitude are part and parcel of the long struggle against capitalism and for the socialist revolution.

in history and to declare it fundamentally flawed and disqualified as a social system. By extension, Marxism was declared obsolete.

It was the absence of open battle by the workers under the leadership of sections of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in defense of socialist property that must be explained. This factor is supposed to be the ultimate “strong point” in the bourgeois argument that socialism is fatally flawed.

But these so-called “strong points” are based upon several great bourgeois lies.

The role of imperialism

The first lie is that the imperialists were innocent bystanders. They simply sat back and watched as socialism “imploded,” as they put

it, from a self-generated internal crisis. In their celebration of the so-called “failure of socialism,” bourgeois pundits omit mention of the fact that imperialism never gave the USSR one moment’s respite from an unremitting campaign of counter-revolutionary sabotage for the entire 74 years of its existence.

They neglect the traumatic effects of the extraordinary external pressure that the Soviet government faced from imperialism, beginning with the early military intervention of 14 imperialist armies after the revolution to the protracted inter-war imperialist encirclement and blockade. They gloss over the fact that Western imperialism encouraged Hitler to march to the East and did little to impede the Nazi invasion of the USSR, in which 20 million people died and 25 million were left homeless, not to speak of the devastation of the entire western section of the country. The effects of 45 years of so-called Cold War are also discounted as a factor in the bourgeois analysis of the collapse.

U.S. imperialism emerged from World War II to galvanize Western and Japanese imperialism for an all-out struggle against the USSR and China. U.S. imperialism engaged in nuclear terror and the continuous development of new and deadly weapons systems. It imposed an economic and technological blockade, carried on political and diplomatic warfare, employed the CIA and every means of sabotage and dirty trick in order to bring down Soviet socialism. These were the predominant factors in the collapse of the USSR. To declare socialism a failure in the face of an all-out attempt to destroy it before it could even begin to function properly is a contradiction on the face of it.

Technological blockade a crucial factor

The second lie is that socialism was defeated in an equal competition. It is impossible to overestimate the detrimental effect on socialist development of the technological blockade of the socialist camp, organized and enforced by U.S. imperialism during the Cold War. The long-run success of socialist construction depended upon raising the produc-

tivity of labor. Under socialism, unlike under capitalism, the increase in the per capita production of society is used to raise the standard of living of the masses. The imperialists compiled obscene wealth based upon the plunder of the entire world and used their advantage to promote the development of science and technology, first and foremost for military advantage, but also for industrial technology in the quest for increased rates of exploitation of the working class.

The U.S. organized an informal but stringent front of all the capitalist countries, with headquarters in Paris, by which thousands of items of technology were declared banned for shipment to the socialist camp. It was called COCOM and operated in secrecy. Violations of its prohibitions were punished by fines and the ban was enforced. In the struggle between the two social systems, imperialism did all in its power to retard the free economic development of the USSR and all the socialist countries.

Imperialism did not dare permit a genuine competition between the planned economy and the capitalist market. It deliberately deprived the socialist camp, the USSR in particular, of access to what should have been universally available human knowledge. Only on that basis alone would it have been possible to test the power and efficiency of the two social systems. What the capitalists knew was that even with all their advantages and with all the disadvantages faced by the USSR, and in spite of the blockade and immense burden of military spending, the Soviet economic and scientific accomplishments were formidable. The imperialists knew that permitting the Soviet Union to compete economically under anything resembling fair and equal conditions, with free access to world markets and technology, would end up demonstrating the superiority of the planned economy and nationalized property.

USSR and imperialism in relation to workers and oppressed

The capitalist version of the struggle between the USSR and imperialism is that there were

two equal “superpowers,” one based on socialism and one based on capitalism. And capitalism won out. But nothing could be further from the truth.

While U.S. imperialism and the other imperialist powers were plundering the oppressed peoples of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America and getting wealthier and wealthier from their exploits, the USSR and the socialist countries were diverting precious funds from socialist construction to give aid to liberation struggles, socialist countries and nationalist regimes throughout the world. From Vietnam to Angola to Cuba to southern Africa, relations between the USSR and the oppressed peoples were a cost to socialist construction borne for the sake of international solidarity in the struggle against imperialism. Imperialism, on the other hand, operated in the underdeveloped world to garner super-profits.

In addition, each act of assistance to an embattled socialist country or a national liberation movement brought the Soviet government into conflict with U.S. imperialism in the global class struggle. The most dramatic was the Cuban missile crisis, in which the Pentagon was a step away from launching a nuclear attack. Conflict brought new threats of war and greater military spending, also to the detriment of socialist construction. The military-industrial complex in the U.S. thrived on war, which was also an artificial means of stimulating the capitalist economy, while the working class paid the bills. In the USSR military spending was antithetical to

socialist construction. It disrupted economic planning and was a constant diversion from civilian spending in an economy that was struggling to overcome its initial underdevelopment and was, at its height, only one-third the size of the U.S. economy.

Furthermore, under capitalism the entire goal of the system is to keep the working class in a permanent state of subsistence living in order to increase the profits of the capitalists. The ruling class will only give the working class what it has won in struggle—and then will try to take it back. Only the organized workers have any protection at all and they are a minority of the working class. The bourgeoisie has no responsibility to see to the needs of the workers.

The USSR and the socialist countries, on the other hand, were responsible for the workers. They had to contend with imperialist militarism and economic sabotage while trying to build socialism and while carrying the basic responsibility to meet the social and economic needs of the workers. Wall Street and the Pentagon were not burdened with having to provide free health care, free education, vacations, pensions, early retirement, low-cost housing, etc., to the entire working class. But the USSR provided all those benefits.

The competition between the two social systems was completely lopsided in favor of imperialism, from a purely economic point of view, because the systems were based on irreconcilable class differences.

Marxist theory and Soviet contradictions

Marxism and the historical prerequisites for socialism

The other big lie is that the internal crisis that finally led to counter-revolution was the result of characteristics inherent in the socialist system. All serious so-called “sovietologists,” the bourgeois “experts” on the USSR, studied Marx and Marxism as a prerequisite for waging ideological war against socialism.

Every one of them knew full well that its economic and cultural underdevelopment, its

numerically weak proletariat in a vast peasant country such as tsarist Russia, was an unfavorable social and historical foundation upon which to build socialism. Having studied Marx and the Russian Revolution, they were aware that socialism can only develop properly on the basis of a high degree of development of the productive forces and a numerically strong, culturally developed working class. Marxist theory posits these condi-

tions as essential economic prerequisites to the healthy, normal building of socialism.

The first task, of course, is for the working class to seize political power and liberate the means of production from the capitalist possessing class. Only under conditions of highly developed production, already achieved by advanced capitalism, can it then rapidly develop the economy to achieve a level of abundance and begin to distribute the ample social wealth among the masses. Under these conditions the socialist revolution can immediately reduce the atmosphere of social tension created by poverty and material scarcity, eliminate the struggle for survival that plagues and dominates the life of the masses under capitalism, insure a sense of material security for all the workers and the non-exploiting population in general, and begin to establish socialist relations on the basis of nationalized property and social and economic planning to meet human need.

It is a fundamental premise of Marxism that capitalism is the transition to a higher social system after thousands of years of class societies. Slavery and then feudalism were based on land and agriculture. Relatively primitive instruments of production were mainly suited to the individual and the productivity of labor was low. The social surplus above what it took society to survive was limited and was seized by the slave-owning and serf-owning landed ruling classes, who had gained political control over society and created the state. The class struggle under slavery and feudalism was over that limited social surplus.

Once capitalism developed and applied science to nature and production, it created gigantic means of production and the modern working class. It developed the productivity of labor to such heights that the material basis for a vast social surplus undreamt of in all previous epochs was created. Once set free from the restrictions of private property and the profit system, the workers using this developed technology could produce an abundance of goods and services sufficient to allow all humanity to reach a level where all

people could be supplied with whatever they needed to live a decent life.

With socialism, the pressuring of workers to spend their whole lives condemned to being cogs in a wheel of one exploiting capitalist enterprise or another would end. Labor would be contributed to society for the benefit of society, not for the sake of enhancing the wealth of the bourgeoisie. Science would be used to ease the burden of labor rather than increase it, as under capitalism. Classes along with class exploitation would be abolished and the basis of oppression and domination would have evaporated. Human history would truly begin.

Thus the objective role of capitalism in history was to raise the level of productivity of labor of society to the point of abundance, which would be the basis for communism, and to create the working class, which would overthrow the bourgeoisie and take possession of the means of production for all of society.

The Bolshevik revolution and the evolution of Soviet society can only be understood within this framework of a scientific Marxist analysis of the role of capitalism in history and the overall conditions for the advancement of socialism.

Marx on transition to communism

Karl Marx laid the basis for a materialist analysis of the problems facing Soviet socialism in his famous work "Critique of the Gotha Program," written in 1875. In one section of this work he was developing the concept of the transition from capitalism to communism. Without being schematic and without going beyond what could be known at the time, Marx tried to anticipate the broad development of the revolution from its early stages, after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the stage of fully developed communism.

What is most instructive is his analysis of the period after the seizure of power, which we today call socialism and Marx termed the first stage of communism.

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundation, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.

Marx explained that a socialist revolution would require a considerable effort at the outset to overcome the backwardness and economic limitations imposed by capitalism—even a revolution achieved under the most favorable conditions of taking over a highly developed capitalist economy, which was his assumption at the time of writing.

Internal contradictions and the collapse

Legacy of feudalism and capitalism

At the time of the Russian Revolution, tsarist Russia was the poorest capitalist country in the world, just emerging from feudalism. The Bolsheviks inherited an underdeveloped country. Society was stamped with the “birthmarks” not of highly advanced capitalism but with those of feudalism and recently developed capitalism. The population was largely illiterate and culturally backward. The revolutionary government was immediately besieged by an imperialist encirclement. It had to build the basis for socialism while lifting the country up in a matter of years to an economic and cultural level that the developed capitalist countries had taken centuries to accomplish.

Far from a relatively relaxed economic and social atmosphere in which the struggle for survival is drastically diminished by socialist distribution of abundant goods, the USSR was beset on all sides, attempting to build up a socialist economy under conditions of extreme scarcity and imperialist pressure. None of the Bolshevik leaders anticipated having to build socialism under such primitive conditions. Once the revolution was defeated in Europe and the USSR was isolated, there was a desperate struggle to raise production.

Production could not be developed in a leisurely, experimental manner. Forced development was regarded as a matter of survival, given the economic isolation and the military preparations in the imperialist countries, particularly once the rearmament of German imperialism got underway.

Departure from socialist norms after Lenin

Even during the darkest times in the early years of the revolution, when Lenin was still at the helm, the party carried out open and fierce debates on matters of foreign and domestic policy, what amounted to matters of life and death. Proletarian democracy was practiced as best as it could be under those dire circumstances.

In Marx’s study of the Paris Commune, “The Civil War in France,” he dealt in detail with the workings of the first living dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx declared:

Its true secret was this: It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labor. ...

The first decree of the Commune ... was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

The Commune was formed of the municipal councilors, chosen by universal suffrage in various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working body, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.

In other words, the representatives were not only responsible for enacting decrees but for carrying them out.

The police and all other officials in the entire administration were also subject to immediate recall and directly responsible to the Commune. But most importantly, from the point of view of preventing the government

from becoming a source of privilege and eroding the class essence of the Commune,

From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workman's wage*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.

Lenin paid the closest attention to all of Marx's findings about the Commune, and applied them to carrying through the revolutionary seizure of power. From a proletarian point of view, the Commune was the most democratic form of government in history. Lenin tried to adhere to the revolutionary democratic standards established in 1871 as closely as possible and particularly the law about party members and officials getting paid no higher than the wages of higher-paid workers.

Under the extreme conditions of cultural and economic poverty, even Lenin had to concede that it was necessary to give some privileges to "experts" to hold on to them during the period of consolidation of the revolution, when the most elementary functions of administration, engineering and so on had to be carried out and the working class had yet to be able to take over these functions.

But as regarded the party and the government, the early Bolsheviks adhered to the "law of the maximum," meaning no one could place their rewards above those of the workers.

None of the Bolshevik leaders at the time thought that they would have to live with such tension between the aspirations to build socialism and dire material deprivation. They all expected that the German revolution and the revolution in Europe would come to their rescue. According to Marxist theory, their task would be next to impossible if the Soviet Union could not obtain material assistance to support the building of socialism.

But the revolution in Europe was defeated by 1923. Lenin died in 1924. After he died, the socialist norms of the Commune were gradually abandoned, including the law of the

maximum. What began as material incentives to foster production grew to become institutionalized, excessive privileges for the upper stratum of society. A differentiation among the workers was promoted. Socialist social relations were subordinated to the development of production. Privilege grew side by side with socialist construction and military development.

These bourgeois tendencies were nourished by the ever-present imperialist military threat and economic blockade. They distorted and eroded the normal operations of socialist institutions, especially proletarian democracy and the direct involvement of the workers in the building of socialism. This permanent war of imperialism against Soviet attempts to build socialism on a drastically insufficient material foundation induced the gradual degeneration of the political leadership and socialist institutions and social relations among the population. The long-term exclusion of the workers from politics led to their alienation and ultimately left them unprepared to recognize, let alone resist, the capitalist counter-revolution when it finally came.

Thus the fundamental defects in Soviet society were not attributable to socialism, to socialist property, to socialist planning, or to working class rule. On the contrary, it was the departure from socialism and the insidious progress of the poisonous legacy of capitalism, bourgeois selfishness and opportunism arising on the foundations of a scarcity enforced by world capitalism that undermined the attempt to build socialism. It was the reemergence of the bourgeois struggle for individual advantage that fostered privilege and undermined the collective, cooperative spirit necessary to build socialist society.

This inheritance from capitalism, nurtured by imperialism, inserted itself gradually into the party, the government and the planning process and eventually eroded the fundamental pillars upon which socialism could be constructed—particularly the most important pillar, the revolutionary enthusiasm and allegiance of a class-conscious working class.

Despite the extraordinary material and scientific accomplishments of the socialist planned economy, the abandonment of the struggle for socialist equality and direct workers' rule proved fatal. A privileged sector rose above the working class, retained a monopoly on statecraft, acted as surrogates for the workers in building socialism and became, over time, a breeding ground for bourgeois counter-revolution. But even with all its material disadvantages, the USSR could have overcome these reactionary tendencies had it not had to deal with the overwhelming pressure of imperialism—i.e., if it had been free to develop socialism

Sino-Soviet split

It is impossible to fully understand the collapse of the USSR without reference to the split between China and the Soviet Union. This split, fostered and nurtured by U.S. imperialism, ultimately weakened both China and the USSR. It helped lead to the retreat by China from proletarian internationalism and toward unprincipled alliances with imperialism and, eventually, to the introduction of the capitalist market on a massive scale.

This split was one of the greatest strategic achievements of imperialism in its struggle against socialism. To grasp this it is only necessary to use one's imagination and conceive of how different world history would be had the People's Republic of China, the most populous socialist country, and the Soviet Union, the most powerful socialist country, been able to form a rock-solid socialist alliance of mutual aid and solidarity and stand shoulder to shoulder against imperialism in the post-war period.

But it was precisely to prevent such a development that imperialism left no stone unturned to forestall and break up what would have been a natural alliance between two class allies, facing the same class enemy.

The complexities in the evolution of this split require extensive treatment beyond the scope of this document. No summary treatment can do justice to those complexities; nevertheless, some basic outlines can be noted.

China shakes the world

The triumph of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 shook the world on both sides of the class barricades. On the one hand it meant the liberation of one-fourth of humanity from colonial slavery, feudalism and comprador capitalism. On the other hand, it constituted a great setback to the historic ambitions and aspirations of Wall Street to dominate China, with its vast potential markets and resources. Washington had to watch as the Chinese Red Army chased the U.S. puppet forces of Chiang Kai-shek off the mainland onto the island province of Taiwan.

The U.S. was engaged in a Cold War confrontation with the USSR in Germany and Eastern Europe. Without letting up one iota on its pressure on the USSR, the Pentagon began to menace China with the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific. It then launched a massive invasion of Korea and marched north toward the Chinese border. With its revolution only two years old, the Chinese Red Army came to the aid of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and helped repel the U.S. military back to the 38th parallel.

Ideological debate

The U.S. kept the People's Republic of China from taking its seat in the United Nations Security Council and pursued a hard line against the PRC while keeping military (including nuclear) pressure on both countries China and the USSR. As they were being put under this kind of relentless pressure by imperialism, an ideological struggle broke out between the leadership of the Chinese and Soviet parties over what orientation to adopt in the struggle. The Chinese leadership emphasized a Leninist approach of not relying on accommodations to keep the imperialists from going to war. They also emphasized support for national liberation struggles and promoted the classical Marxist conception that socialism could not be achieved by peaceful means.

The Soviet leaders, on the other hand, were promoting the concept of fighting for peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Their position was that the existence of nuclear weap-

ons changed the equation and that world politics, including the support for national liberation struggles, had to be subordinated to what they considered to be a struggle against nuclear confrontation and for world peace. While not excluding revolution, the Soviet leadership left a big ideological loophole for reformism by claiming that the peaceful transition to socialism was one viable option for the proletariat.

State-to-state struggle

In the midst of this debate, the imperialists began to stir troubled waters. While keeping China under the gun, they began to maneuver with the Soviet leadership, whom they correctly perceived as “soft.” The Soviet leaders began to take the ideological struggle with China to a state-to-state level. Khrushchev went to meet with Eisenhower at Camp David in 1959 for talks on a so-called “thaw” in the Cold War. But the Soviet leadership never consulted with China on the visit. In 1960, the USSR withdrew all its material aid to China and in 1963 the USSR signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Kennedy administration, again without any agreement or prior consultation with China.

The Chinese leadership regarded this break of solidarity as an act of betrayal directed against them. This escalation by the Soviet leaders of the ideological split into a rupture in state-to-state relations was soon reciprocated by China. The Chinese leadership went overboard and falsely characterized the Soviet Union as “social-imperialist,” thus laying the ideological basis for an eventual anti-Soviet alliance and the abandonment of proletarian internationalism—which was what the ideological struggle had been about in the first place. China’s support for the U.S.-backed UNITA against the MPLA in Angola, which was allied with the USSR, was just one tragic consequence of the split.

China was a completely underdeveloped country, needing significant material support for the development of a socialist base. Being cut off from the USSR, it eventually turned to capitalist methods and an open door policy to Western capital. Once the alliance was in

tatters and both states were in conflict, U.S. imperialism tore up the so-called “détente” with the USSR and began its anti-Soviet “full court press.”

Bourgeois propagandists/analysts exclude any account of this monumental, long-term Machiavellian campaign by imperialism to bring about this horrific split when they try to indoctrinate people with their version of the so-called “failure” of socialism. The bourgeois interpretation of the collapse is one of the greatest mutilations of history.

Achievements concealed

In addition to suppressing the real causes for the collapse of the USSR, the bourgeoisie is silent on its achievements. The revolution took a backward, rural country from the status of underdevelopment to become the second-greatest industrial power in the world. The socialist planned economy never had a single year of declining production (save during World War II)—not a single recession or depression. It largely defeated the Nazis. It launched the space age with Sputnik. It carried out the largest construction projects in history. It provided the first universal program of free or low-cost social benefits to the entire working class while maintaining guaranteed employment.

It was the first government to establish a national legislative body based upon representation of the various nationalities. It instituted a vast affirmative action program for formerly oppressed peoples. It granted suffrage to women before that right was won in the United States. In its early years, before the departure from socialist norms, it established the right of women to divorce on demand, to abortion on demand, and in general tried to overcome the patriarchal system it inherited. It declared sexual preference to be a private matter, striking down all the old anti-gay laws.

And it did all this without bosses, without capitalist exploitation. It showed the way to the future.

The Soviet Union after Gorbachev was broken up into a fragmented array of smaller

capitalist states taking the place of the federated republics. The descent of these former Soviet republics socially and economically after the triumph of capitalism gives a scientific demonstration of how much the USSR, with all its defects, had represented a social system superior to capitalism, from the point of view of the workers and the oppressed.

Despite the fragmentation, this new array of capitalist societies exists on the same land mass, has the same productive forces, the same geographical features, the same historical and cultural conditions, stretching over one-sixth of the earth's surface, as did the USSR which preceded it. The capitalist counter-revolution affords a truly rare instance where two societies can be subjected to a scientific comparison.

Unemployment, poverty, homelessness, prostitution, the social and economic degradation of women, destruction of social insurance of

all types, capitalist-style inequality with billionaires growing out of the plunder of state resources, rampant crime, national antagonism and racism are among the most prominent social and economic evils that have reappeared since the undoing of three-quarters of a century of Soviet rule. The United Nations has documented the plummeting of life expectancy, the rise in infant mortality and other indices of social decline. These afflictions, so characteristic of capitalism, had been either entirely eliminated or greatly mitigated during the Soviet period.

In Eastern Europe, which has been colonized by the transnational banks and corporations, women and children are sold into sex slavery and prostitution in the West. Millions of workers have had to emigrate just to find jobs.

Lessons on first phase of struggle for socialism

The political movement must extract from the Soviet experience those universal features that were responsible for the enormous progress of the working class and for society as a whole. They began with the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, the expropriation of the ruling class, the nationalization of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and central planning based upon human need. These progressive social features, which brought the extraordinary success of the USSR, must be clearly distinguished from the retrogressive legacy of the old society that contributed to the demise of socialism. Whatever distortions, misuse, misapplication, etc., of these socialist measures may have taken place, they will, properly handled, be fundamental to building socialism in the future.

The first seizure of power by the working class took place in Paris in March 1871 with the establishment of the Paris Commune. The Commune broke up the capitalist state, abolished the standing army, put in its place the popular National Guard, legislated on behalf of the workers and the middle class, and cre-

ated a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship that was the most democratic government of the people in history. It was crushed before it could begin its real work of social transformation. The Commune lasted 68 days before it was overwhelmed by the forces of the French bourgeoisie and drowned in blood.

It was 46 years later, in the midst of an imperialist war, that the working class finally succeeded in not only seizing power, but holding it in Russia in 1917. The Bolshevik revolution, led by the party of Lenin, thus began the first true phase of the struggle to build socialism in the world.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks never expected to be able to hold power in Russia on a long-term basis. They felt they would succeed if they could hold out long enough for the revolution in the big, developed capitalist powers in Europe. But the revolutionary impulse given by the Russian Revolution was pushed back by the counter-revolution in Europe. The revolution then spread east, culminating in the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949. It also spread to the Korean peninsula,

then to Southeast Asia, Cuba and Africa. But the imperialists after World War II were able to stabilize their rule at home and keep the socialist revolution on the periphery.

The exception was the revolutionary uprising of 1974 in Portugal, which was forced back by the threat of NATO intervention. But Portugal was the poorest of the European powers, drained by a colonial war in Africa, and the Portuguese bourgeoisie was so poor, relative to the rest of Western Europe, that it had been unable to stabilize its rule.

In retrospect, without diminishing the mistakes and betrayals of leaders, the overriding historical fact is that the first phase of the struggle was fought out on the most unfavorable terrain for the sustained success of the socialist revolution, on the terrain of underdevelopment. Marx's prognosis that developed capitalism was the historical basis for successfully building socialism has been borne out in the global class struggle. The ability of the material strongholds of world capitalism to revive and develop, and the inability of the working class in the imperialist countries to come to the aid of the socialist camp by overthrowing their own bourgeoisie, allowed imperialism to split the socialist camp and to finally overwhelm the material bastion of socialism, the USSR. What the collapse of the USSR showed is that socialism cannot be permanently secure on the globe until it spreads throughout the world and imperialism is destroyed.

The collapse of the USSR ended the first phase of the struggle for socialism in the world. Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Vietnam and China (with all its contradictions), represent that first historic phase that began in 1917. Whatever concessions they have made, even China with its dangerous opening to capitalism, they have held out so far and have not succumbed to capitalist counter-revolution.

The revolutions led by Fidel Castro, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Zedong accomplished the overthrow of imperialism by the merging of the national liberation struggle and the proletarian revolution. Each revolu-

tion was uniquely created and adapted to the national culture, the historic traditions and the class conditions of each country. At the same time, each has its roots in the Bolshevik revolution

What is needed to permanently secure their revolutions is for the working class in the imperialist countries to rise and take its proper place in history, consummating the next phase of the struggle through the proletarian revolution.

The collapse of the USSR was followed by the longest (but not the strongest) capitalist upturn in the century. The bourgeoisie, the U.S. imperialists in particular, were delirious. They thought they had escaped their fate forever. The capitalist system had triumphed over socialism. The specter of communism that Marx wrote about in the Manifesto had been exorcised once and for all. The world was all theirs for the taking.

Ideologists were writing about "the end of history." Economists were writing about the "new economy" that had finally overcome the boom-and-bust business cycle.

The Clinton administration stepped up its attacks on the workers and oppressed at home, balancing the budget on the backs of the workers. In the most outrageous violation of international law and all previous norms of international conduct, Clinton rained missiles on Afghanistan and Sudan, exercising the new, post-Soviet superpower arrogance. He carried out a brutal bombing campaign against Serbia, bombing Belgrade and other civilian targets with Nazi-like callousness. Gen. Wesley Clark, the NATO commander of the war, sent a shot across the bow to the Chinese government by bombing its embassy in Belgrade. U.S. forces had a brief but sharp military confrontation with the Russians. All this was carried out to the cheers of the capitalist establishment. U.S. imperialism began to flex its muscles in all directions.

But then came the crash of 2000, with massive layoffs followed by a jobless recovery, and the laws of capitalism began to reassert themselves. Washington went from being an

open advocate of empire to prisoner of the quagmire in Iraq. It has to face the fact that the independent countries of the world refuse to bow down and surrender their sovereignty and right to self-determination and self-defense.

The world is too big for the U.S. to conquer. The masses of people in the 21st century, having passed through almost a century of revolution and national liberation struggles, are on a far higher cultural, technical and technological level than were the masses of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when imperialism first triumphed and divided up the world. In the course of globalization, i.e., of expanding its exploitation, capitalism has not only brought into existence a vast new working class but has necessarily supplied it with technological and military know-how. The very means of exploitation will be turned against the bourgeoisie and become the means of liberation.

The more it attempts to conquer the world, the more its fundamental strategic weakness, its "feet of clay," will become apparent. To prepare for the crises and opportunities ahead, the movement must go back to Marx and Lenin, must arm itself ideologically, so that it can intervene and help guide the coming struggle of the workers and oppressed to class victory.

The collapse of the USSR did not abolish the fundamental contradictions of capitalism that gave rise to the Bolshevik revolution in the first place. In an irony of history, the collapse of the USSR, by removing many barriers to a new phase in the global development of capitalism and imperialism, has accelerated the globalization of imperialism, which is rapidly laying the material and social basis for the next phase in the struggle for world socialism.