

Festival of Oppressors

New Tsars Hold Party Congress

The 25th Congress of the Soviet "Communist" Party was recently concluded in early March. There was once a time when the convening of 5,000 delegates from throughout the Soviet Union and from 103 foreign parties and groups would have heralded the great advances of the Soviet working class and struck a note for unity and struggle against capitalism throughout the world. Instead the Congress took place at a time of growing internal crisis and war preparations for the Soviet rulers. Highlighted by the results of the 1971-75 Five Year Plan and the announcement of the 1976-80 Five Year Plan, it was a further exposé that capitalism has been fully restored in the Soviet Union and that its ruling class and the ruling class of the U.S. stand as the two main enemies of the peoples of the world.

The recent Congress and the new five year plan adopted there provide even further insight into the workings of capitalism in the USSR. The rulers of the USSR, of course, do not call themselves capitalists and imperialists. Far from it, they go out of their way to hide capitalism behind fine sounding words about socialist construction and hide imperialist aggression and war preparations behind the banner of "proletarian internationalism." This makes it all the more important for the ugly features of imperialism to be exposed and the veil of socialism ripped off the face of the Soviet bourgeoisie.

The rulers of the Soviet Union used the occasion of the Congress to paint a rosy picture of their country. In his five hour opening speech Brezhnev bragged about the "crisis-free, steadily growing economy," one that has "boundless horizons of continued all-round progress."

Soviet Economy a Mess

But the fact is the Soviet economy is a mess. Agricultural production is a disaster, decreasing in seven of the last eleven years since Brezhnev came to power in 1964. Last year total grain output was 80 million tons short of the planned target. As a result the Soviet Union has had to import increasingly huge amounts of wheat and other grain, especially from its arch-rival, the United States. *The per-capita grain output in 1975 was even lower than in 1913 in tsarist Russia.*

There is a real scarcity of consumer goods, with production in this area coming to only 89% of the target of the 1971-75 plan. At the same time the people's standard of living remains low, with the Soviet press reporting that one-quarter of the total population now lives below the level "guaranteeing the lowest standard of material life," figures strikingly similar to those from the U.S. bourgeoisie which also show one fourth of the population living below the "official poverty line." Like the U.S., prices have been steadily rising and the Soviet workers have been shouldering increasingly heavy taxes. According to published statistics from Soviet authorities taxes have risen 87.4% from 1960 to 1973.

Debts are piling up. Since 1964 the country has borrowed more than \$20 billion from Western countries, more than 80% of it coming in the last five years. Forced to seek capital from abroad, the USSR has entered into agreements with Western corporations allowing them a share in managing Western financed enterprises and a percentage of the product produced. This means that increasingly Western capital is exploiting Soviet workers.

Unemployment, alcoholism, crime, prostitution, the oppression of different nationalities within the USSR and the oppression of women have all been on the increase.

Arming to the Teeth

This is what the "crisis-free, steadily growing economy" of the Soviet Union looks like. But while the production of agriculture and consumer goods has generally been stagnating, the production of military hardware and related heavy industries has been skyrocketing as the Soviet ruling class, like their U.S. counterparts, makes preparations for a new world war.

One result of this huge arms expansion and preparations for war has been to create great contradictions in the Soviet economy. There is a modern and expanding heavy industry section, especially machine building, while agriculture and light industry remain very weak. Investment and technology in arms, computers, instruments, etc., is developing rapidly while investment in industries producing goods for Soviet consumers is stagnant. Like in the U.S. there are many nuclear weapons, but the people's standard of living is on the decline.

This growing crisis and militarization of the Soviet



Bossman speaks at Soviet Party Congress.

Union is a little different than what was promised to the Soviet people at the last Congress in 1971. At that time Brezhnev promised a radical improvement in the living standards of the Soviet people. A five year plan was approved then setting a target for industrial growth of at least 42% and promising that the main thrust of economic policy would be to raise the people's standard of living.

And despite Brezhnev's bald-faced lying at the Congress when he stated that "The Soviet Union has no need of war. The Soviet Union is not increasing its military budget. It is...continuously increasing the allocations for raising the well-being of the people," facts are quite the opposite. The Soviet Union spends more each year on armaments than the U.S., although the gross national product is only half as large. Fifteen to twenty per cent of the Soviet economy is production for war.

Both the economic shambles in the Soviet Union and the huge growth in war spending are closely related, and both are the result of the laws of capitalism which lead, in the Soviet Union, like in our own country, to stagnation and war.

Socialism Destroyed in USSR

Socialism once existed in the Soviet Union when the working class was in power and, facing great obstacles, was able to implement an economic plan that was truly based on the overall needs and development of society and follow a foreign policy based on defending the workers' state, opposing imperialist war, and supporting world revolution. Despite constant encirclement by hostile capitalist countries and the devastation of first a civil war following the revolution and then World War 2, the Soviet Union under socialism developed from a backward, mostly agricultural nation to a powerful industrial country, and overall the standard of living for the masses of people improved considerably. The Soviet Union stood as a bright hope to working people around the world, as an example of what the working class could achieve once it had thrown off the yoke of capitalism.

But all that has changed today. With the rise to power of Khrushchev in 1956, the capitalists managed to seize control of the Communist Party, once the political vanguard of the working class. From this position they turned the state into an instrument to enforce their rule and began to restore capitalism.

Khrushchev launched a systematic attack on the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and began the process of replacing working class fighters in the Communist Party with bourgeois elements. Under his leadership the new capitalist class proceeded to wreck the achievements of socialism, breaking up the centralized rule of the working class and dismantling

socialist enterprises. Profit began to figure prominently in determining the direction of the economy. For example, the 1961 new program of the CPSU (in one of the first and most shameless proclamations of capitalist principles) stated that, "the Party attaches prime importance to more *effective investments*, the choice of the most profitable and economical trends in capital construction, achievement of maximum growth of output per invested ruble, and the reduction of the time lapse between investment and return." (emphasis in original)

But Khrushchev's wrecking of socialism and unleashing of the spontaneous forces of capitalism only brought chaos to the economy, leading to his replacement, in 1964, by Brezhnev and Kosygin. Centralized state and Party control was reasserted. "Discipline" and "control" re-emerged as watchwords of the day. Only this time the political power was consolidated in the hands of new finance capitalists consisting of high Party and state officials. The economy was systematically restructured according to consistent monopoly capitalist principles, with profit firmly in command.

State Monopoly Capitalism

Today the Soviet economy is one of state monopoly capitalism. The economy is organized into large-scale Production Associations—huge trusts or syndicates merging industrial or production enterprises with different state ministries. Like any capitalist society, profit is the key motive force in the economy and the profitability of different areas of the economy regulates the relationship between them and the extremely important state credit institutions.

Restoring the rule of profit has led to huge dislocations in the Soviet economy. Most dramatically, it is behind the monumental failures of Soviet agriculture, which hasn't proven to be a profitable enough area of investment.

This kind of state capitalism has allowed the capitalists of the Soviet Union to achieve a high concentration of capital and a relatively high degree of unity in their actions. However, competition between the different monopoly capitalists is developing rapidly. While competition takes place among all the capitalist elements in Soviet society, it takes place primarily between different high Party and state officials who control different Production Associations and ministries.

All this sharpens the growing exploitation of the Soviet working class. Capitalism is based on the creation of surplus value by the working class and its appropriation in various forms by the capitalist class. The competition between the different capitalists forces them to speed up and in other ways intensify the exploitation of the working class in order to achieve the highest rate of profit. That is exactly what the Soviet capitalists are doing. In the 1971-75 Five Year Plan "productivity" increased 23%. However, this was not enough according to the Congress. Brezhnev criticized the "violation of planning and labor discipline," in particular saying there was "disrespect toward the land, bad use of machinery and fertilizer and irresponsibility." The Congress voted unanimously that the 1976-80 plan should lay heavy emphasis on more "efficiency."

For example Brezhnev praised the Gorky and Minsk automobile works for setting "an example in raising labor productivity based on the personal production plans of every worker." And when the Soviet bosses talk about "productivity" and "efficiency" they mean the same thing that the exploiters in this country do—squeezing more out of the labor of the working class.

And, like in this country, the reward for many workers when an enterprise achieves greater "productivity" is being laid off. In 1971, a Soviet paper reported how every day two hundred people are turned away from jobs at Kama, where the Soviets were building the world's largest truck plant. And who did the Soviet paper blame for this? "The thoughtlessness of those who come unbidden." (Quoted in *Red Papers 7: How Capitalism Has Been Restored in the Soviet Union And What This Means For The World Struggle.*)

Anarchy Reigns in Soviet Economy

With profit in command, the Soviet bourgeoisie, like the capitalists everywhere, cannot possibly develop the Soviet economy efficiently, rapidly and in a balanced, all-round way. Anarchy reigns. In last year's harvest, for example, a large number of harvesters, trucks and tractors were unusable because there was a shortage of spare parts. The result was that for the potato harvest, which was an all-round disaster, potatoes had to be hand-loaded onto trucks in many places, which meant much of the harvest rotted in the ground. This is because the production of spare parts is not as profitable as the production of machines.

Moreover the anarchic, disorganized and competitive way that capitalism works not only distorts what is produced but also affects how much is produced. Since 1928 the Soviet Union has carried out nine Five Year Plans for economic development, including the

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recently concluded plan. Up to 1955, when the working class held power and was building socialism, the gross value of industrial output grew at an average annual rate of more than 13%, the highest growth rate in the world. However, in the period from 1971-1975 the industrial output grew only 7.4%, a further decline from the 8.4% growth rate of 1966-70. The decline in non-military production growth has been much steeper.

Brezhnev Calls for "Class Struggle"

As in all imperialist countries, the drive for maximum profit is at the root of the Soviets' economic planning. And, similarly, it is the drive for maximum profit that also determines Soviet foreign policy and relationships with other countries.

At the Congress Brezhnev said a lot of fine words about "proletarian internationalism" and the peace-loving nature of the Soviet Union. While continuing to spread the smokescreen of detente, Brezhnev provided a new twist when he said, "Detente does not in the slightest abolish, and cannot abolish or alter, the laws of class struggle. None should expect that, because of detente, Communists will reconcile themselves with capitalist exploitation or that monopolists become followers of the revolution." This goes hand-in-hand with other proclamations at the Congress about giving full support to the national liberation struggles.

None of this means, of course, that the Soviet party has abandoned revisionism and has returned to Marxism-Leninism. Rather this increased use of talk about "proletarian internationalism" and class struggle is to serve the purpose of the Soviet's increased contention with the U.S.

A recent article in *Peking Review No. 6*, in 1976, commenting on the Soviet's aggression in Angola sharply exposed the difference between these fine-sounding words and the Soviet's foul smelling deeds:

"When the Algerian people fought for national independence, the Soviet revisionists stood by with folded arms, saying that they would not interfere in another country's internal affairs. At the crucial juncture of the Egyptian people's war against aggression, they stopped arms supplies to get a stranglehold on them. When the Cambodian people waged a punitive war against the Lon Nol clique, they sided with the traitors. Is your criminal record of being betrayers of internationalism still not long enough? Take the case of Angola. You never extended any real support to the Angolan people during their protracted and arduous struggle to free themselves from the Portuguese colonial yoke, but right after the collapse of the old colonial rule and the attainment of independence by the Angolan people, you become most 'generous' by sending a great amount of lethal weapons of the latest type to stir up and aggravate the civil war. Can a real socialist country do a thing like this?"

The answer, of course, is no. As each new Soviet "internationalist" power play comes to light, it becomes ever clearer that they wrap themselves in the red flag for one reason only—to compete with U.S. imperialism in the name of "anti-imperialism," to seize colonial possessions in the guise of liberating them.

Soviets Seek New Division of World

At the Congress Brezhnev stated, "We are opponents of the division of the world into military blocs and also the arms race. Our position on this is well known." When Brezhnev said that Soviet policy is "well known" he blurted out one of the few truthful statements made by him at the entire Congress. Events in the world repeatedly show that the Soviets, like our own ruling class, are going all out to shore up and expand their military bloc for the purpose of world war, and it is "well known" that the Soviet's talk of opposing the arms race and military blocs is pure deception.

The fact is the Soviets, late-comers to the imperialist dinner table, are driven by the laws of capitalism to try to challenge the existing division of the world into "spheres of influence," which still reflects, to a large degree, the period following World War 2 when the Soviet Union was still a socialist country, and hence had no need to dominate and exploit other countries, and the U.S. was the dominant imperialist power in the world.

While the U.S. has grown weaker relative to the USSR and its other imperialist rivals, the Soviet capitalists have turned the USSR into an imperialist superpower and are overall on the offensive, everywhere contending with the U.S. for raw materials to be seized, for markets for the export of capital and for workers to exploit. For its part the U.S. is desperately trying to maintain the "status quo" and, in the long run, to further expand its exploitation and plunder. It is this contention that is increasingly threatening

to embroil the peoples of the world in another world war.

It is the necessity to challenge the U.S. that forces the Soviet ruling class to engage in such feverous war preparations and devote such a large chunk of the national wealth of the USSR to arms production.

The Soviets have had to build up a new kind of army. Inheriting a socialist army, based on defending the homeland, they have had to remodel it into a modern, imperialist army, able to operate overseas and at distances far away from the USSR. To serve imperialist gunboat diplomacy, for example, a huge amount of capital has been poured into developing an offensive navy, one which can threaten other countries and challenge U.S. naval forces and shipping far out at sea. In building up their military, the Soviets have also discovered, like the U.S. imperialists, that the export of military hardware to other countries is a good way to make big profits, and an important form for the Soviets to bring other countries under their control.

International Division of Labor

In Brezhnev's speech at the Congress he talked about the "particular importance" of the "long term program of economic integration," with the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or COMECON) countries of Eastern Europe and Cuba. This is just the same old program of "international division of labor" that the Soviets have long used as a justification for trying to dominate and plunder other countries throughout the world.

For the CMEA countries the "international division of labor" means they must recognize the "leading role" of the Soviet Union and not "develop certain industrial departments" because the Soviet Union already "has built up such industrial departments." The Soviet Union has used this kind of junk to justify turning these countries into dependencies, supplying her with certain materials at a low cost: Czechoslovakia—machine tools, Cuba—sugar, and Bulgaria—cheap imported labor to work in the Soviet Union, in a Soviet-style "bracero program." At the same time the Soviet Union has monopolized their supply of fuel and critical raw materials, forcing them to import from the USSR almost all their oil, 80-90% of their iron ore and timber, three-quarters of their rolled metal and phosphate fertilizer, etc.

The key area for both superpowers, at present, is Europe. As it says in the *Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party*, "it is in Europe that vast economic, political, and military power is based, which the superpowers must seek to control." Both are clutching what they have and stretching out to grab more. The U.S. imperialists have tremendous investments in Western Europe and this has increased in recent years. But the Soviets, who despite difficulties, still have firmer control of Eastern Europe, are going all out to put the western half under their control too.

Soviets Use Revisionist Parties

As an important part of the Soviet's efforts, they are trying to turn the revisionist Communist Parties in Western Europe into "trojan horses." This was one of the subjects the Soviet Congress really emphasized. In an attempt to tighten up on its control of these parties the Congress made a big deal about "Party unity" and "proletarian internationalism." As Brezhnev put it, "communists of different countries follow each other's work with interest and understandable attention. Differences of opinion and approach to some questions may arise among them from time to time... Certainly, there can be no question of compromise on matters of principle, of reconciliation with views and actions contrary to the Communist ideology. This is ruled out." But these fine words are meant to describe the opposite of real proletarian internationalism. For the Soviet rulers, "proletarian internationalism" means the West European revisionist parties should recognize the Soviet Union as the only leader of the "communist" world and aid in her efforts to expand into West Europe.

But on this point the Soviets met their greatest resistance at the Congress. The heads of the French and Spanish revisionist parties didn't even attend the Congress. The head of the Italian CP, Enrico Berlinguer, stood up and stated the aims of his revisionist party were different than Moscow's. The Soviets came under fire from the ruling parties in Yugoslavia and Romania, whose representatives gave speeches explaining their countries' differences with the Soviets. The leaders of the West European revisionist CPs clearly feel tugged from both ends in their search to become ruling capitalists: on the one hand to toe the line with the Soviets, and on the other hand to cooperate with the existing capitalist class in their own countries and get cut in on the action that way.

Another part of the Soviet expansionist plans is directed at China. At the Congress a short but sharp attack was directed at China, an attempt to turn reality on its head and blame China for increasing the danger of a new world war. The Soviet social-imperialists have not given up their attempt to extend their exploitation to the Chinese laboring people by war or other means. Politically this kind of threat and black mail is

also a feeble attempt designed to shut China up or at least undermine the effectiveness of her exposures of the imperialist nature of the Soviet Union.

Resistance to Social Imperialism

There is a growing struggle against the domination of the Soviet Union throughout the world. Large numbers of Soviet secret agents have been exposed and expelled from various parts of the world in the last few years. Since the October War in the Middle East, the imperialist features of the Soviet Union in betraying the liberation struggle of the Arab and Palestinian people have been more and more recognized. Their agitation for the establishment of an "Asian collective security system" aimed at dominating Asia has met with little response. Soviet occupation of several Japanese islands has aroused the indignation of the Japanese people. And numerous countries have established a 200-mile offshore limit in an attempt to keep Soviet fishing fleets, as well as fleets from other imperialist powers, from exhausting their fish resources.

There has also been a growing struggle of the great Soviet working class and masses of Soviet people against the restoration of capitalism in their country. This growing resistance is taking place despite a whole network of spies in every corner of the country and the establishment of "psychiatric" hospitals and concentration camps for political persecutions. It is reported, for instance, that underground organizations and secret publications have emerged continually over the last five years. In Kiev, Vitebsk, Tbilisi and many other cities, workers strikes and demonstrations have taken place, while slowdowns are common throughout the country. There has even been struggle within the concentration camps, where, according to *Peking Review No. 10*, 1976, over one million people are imprisoned, with hunger strikes, refusals to work and occasional prison riots taking place.

One area where resistance has become particularly sharp is among the various nationalities of the Soviet Union. In Tsarist days Russia was known as "the prison house of nations," for its vicious oppression of nationalities. Under socialism great strides were made toward eliminating all national inequality. But with the restoration of capitalism all this has been reversed and there have been increasing attacks on the rights of nationalities throughout the Soviet Union. In many places, for instance, the revisionists have attempted to wipe out the native language, not allowing them to be spoken in school. The result has been powerful protests from among these peoples and from the Soviet people in general. In the three republics along the Baltic Sea, for example, there is widespread reluctance to use the Russian language. In Kiev, Odessa, Iva-Frankovsk and other major Ukrainian cities, there have been mass demonstrations for equality between the Ukrainian and Russian languages in the Ukraine.

The U.S. ruling class would like us to believe that the current mess in the Soviet Union, and its intensifying war preparations, are an example of "socialism" or "communism." But the suffering of the working class of the Soviet Union is a result of capitalist exploitation, and it is imperialism that threatens world war. Toward the end of his speech Brezhnev allowed himself to dream out loud about the "unbreakable unity of all our country's classes." But there will never be unity between exploiters and exploited, and the working class of the Soviet Union, like our class in this country, will never give up struggling until the rule of capital is dumped once and for all. ■

Utilities...

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people freezing and going without light.

A member of UWOC was given loud cheers when she spoke about the campaign to fight the hike and expressed strong support for the people of Sayersville, N.J., who have stopped paying their utility bills to force PSE&G to roll back the rates.

Similar developments have taken place in other cities around the country as working people are forced to fight on still another battle front to defend their standard of living.

In the Bay Area the May First Workers Organization called a picket line and demonstration on February 20 to oppose rate increases by the Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E). Workers marched right into the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) hearing. "Present rates are already too damn high," they said. "And it's even worse if you're unemployed or retired. It's intolerable that the PUC is even considering approving another \$485 million increase—15% on gas and 5% on electricity."

Even in the temperate Bay Area \$40, \$50 and even \$80-a-month utility bills are not uncommon. A young Bay Area couple with two children said PG&E cut them off because they could only pay \$30 of a \$46 bill.

Heat and electricity aren't luxuries...They're necessities and our families won't be without! ■