

PART I

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CONCRETE CONDITIONS INTERNATIONALLY AND IN THE U.S.

Generally speaking, the nineteenth century was marked by the development of capitalism in North America, Europe, Russia and Japan (though the development of capitalism in different countries occurred unevenly--i.e., at different times and at different rates of speed), while the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America became dependencies of one kind or another of the various capitalist countries. In most capitalist countries, the first three quarters of the nineteenth century was

1/ V.I. Lenin The State and Revolution (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1973) P. 83-84 (Emphasis added)

highlighted by the growth of industry or, to put it another way, the development of industrial capitalism. Significantly, this development occurred in the midst of (was spurred on by) the competition of large numbers of small (in some cases, individually-owned) industrial enterprises. Hence, the era of the development of industrial capitalism was simultaneously the era of competitive capitalism.

In the course of this competition, the strong devoured the weak and monopolies gradually came into existence. Monopolies, in turn, apportioned the markets amongst themselves, fixed the quantity and the quality of the goods to be produced, fixed prices and divided the subsequent profits. Thus, competitive capitalism--competition among scattered, individual manufacturers--became a thing of the past, monopoly capitalism arose in its place, and industry became the monopoly of an ever decreasing number of entrepreneurial magnates. Soon thereafter, banking became the monopoly of a handful of financiers, and the banking and industrial monopolies subsequently merged into a financial oligarchy, which, in alliance with the state, completely dominated the economic and political life of the country in which the financial oligarchy was based.

With the advent of monopolies, in other words, competitive capitalism gave way to monopoly capitalism, which is the material (economic) basis of imperialism. Thus, the fundamental attribute of imperialism, penetrating all aspects of the economic and political life in imperialist countries, is monopoly rule.

Yet, whether we speak of capitalism in its young, progressive, competitive stage, or of imperialism, capitalism at its highest stage of development, the capitalist mode of production is governed by the same internal laws.

"Under capitalism, production grows spontaneously. Industry proceeds planlessly, anarchically. The race for profits evokes a tendency towards unlimited expansion of production. However, this tendency meets the impassable barriers of capitalist relations. These barriers have their roots in the fact that the consuming power of the broad masses is limited because of their exploitation by capital."

In other words, inherent in capitalism "...is the deepest contradiction between the colossal growth of production possibilities and the relatively reduced purchasing power of the working masses....In order to obtain more profits, the capitalists expand production, improve technical processes, exploit the

workers more intensively....The constant trend towards a reduction in the rate of profit, peculiar to capitalism, spurs each entrepreneur on to greater expansion. But this tendency towards an unlimited expansion of industry inevitably comes into conflict with the limited powers of consumption of the broad masses of workers. (Therefore) the growth of exploitation does not only mean the growth of production. It also means a reduction in the purchasing power of the masses....Hence the inevitability of overproduction crises under capitalism." 1/

Such crises occur periodically, though not at regular intervals, as was once thought. Between one crisis and another, the capitalist economy passes through a series of processes, known as a cycle. This cycle usually unfolds in the following manner: After a certain period of boom, the capitalist economy experiences a crisis as a result of overproduction. At first, the crisis occurs in the form of a relatively mild slowdown of the economy (recession), but eventually takes the form of the economy's nearly complete stagnation and breakdown (depression). Following an often extended period of depression, the economy experiences a period of gradual recovery, which eventually gives rise to another period of boom. And so it has been since the occurrence of the first general crisis of capitalism in several European countries in 1825.

What measures are employed to get over these crises? Initially, the attempt is made to shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the working class and the masses. That is, through widespread layoffs and firings, etc., the size of the workforce is rather significantly reduced, while the remaining (employed) workers are subjected to various intensification of labor techniques (lower wages, longer work weeks, compulsory overtime, speedup, etc.). But such attacks only have the effect of intensifying the crisis, for the basic problem--an internal market unable to consume all that is being produced--has not been eliminated. Ultimately, therefore, the monopoly capitalists seek to put an end to the crisis, secondarily through the destruction of excess commodities and primarily through the exportation of these commodities to foreign markets. However, since the general crisis of capitalism is rarely, if ever, confined to one capitalist country, but simultaneously involves virtually all capitalist countries, a number

1/ A. Leontiev, Political Economy, A Beginners' Course (Proletarian Publishers, San Francisco) pp.183-184. (Emphasis in original)

of imperialist countries inevitably become involved in a struggle for the world's available markets. This struggle inexorably leads to armed conflicts between the contending countries-- in other words, to imperialist wars.

In the U.S., capitalism did not become the dominant mode of economy until capitalism's chief competitor for hegemony over the U.S. economy, chattel slavery, was abolished as a result of the Civil War. Therefore, the above-described cycle (boom, recession, depression, recovery and boom) did not begin occurring in the U.S. as a whole until the Civil War's conclusion. From then on, however, the cycle has been a consistent feature of U.S. economic life, with periodic crises having occurred in the early 1870s, the early 1890s, the decade 1900-1910, the early 1920s, the decade 1929-1939, the late 1940s, the late 1950s and the early 1970s.

Each of the above eight crises resulted in the widespread intensification of labor. During or in the wake of four of the crises, the intensification of labor was coupled with brutal suppression of the working class and the masses (the abandonment of Reconstruction and the armed suppression of the national railroad strike, both of which occurred in 1877; the Supreme Court's legalization of Jim Crow in 1896; and the anti-worker/anti-communist campaigns of the early 1920s and late 1940s). And during or in the wake of the other four crises, the intensification of labor was accompanied by reforms of one kind or another (Teddy Roosevelt's "Trust Busting" during the years 1900-1908; FDR's "New Deal" during the years 1932-1940; the Civil Rights Acts of the late 1950s and early 1960s; and the post-Watergate reforms of the early 1970s). On the other hand, the crises of the early 1870s, the early 1920s, the late 1940s, the late 1950s, and the early 1970s did not give rise to imperialist war, while the crises of the early 1890s, the decade 1900-1910 and the decade 1929-1939 gave rise to the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II, respectively.

The fact that the most recent crisis has not resulted in the U.S. initiating imperialist war has nothing to do with the wisdom or benevolence of America's current leaders; rather, it is due to the current state of the U.S. economy. That is, in the wake of the rather short-lived crisis of the early 1970s, the U.S. economy is currently experiencing the usual period of recovery. Having prevented the crisis from becoming protracted, this recovery has thus relieved U.S. imperialism of the need to initiate imperialist war. And yet, the outbreak of imperialist war remains a very active possibility, as the following review of the international situation makes abundantly clear.

U.S. imperialism's world-wide empire, though by no means in a headlong gallop toward destruction, has been experiencing a gradual but persistent decline since the triumph of the New Democratic revolution in China in October 1949. Since that time, North Korea, Algeria, Cuba, a host of African countries, and the Southeast Asian countries of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea have all thrown off the yoke of U.S. imperialism. Meanwhile, however, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the world-wide struggle for socialism suffered a severe setback as a result of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and the transformation of that country into a social-imperialist power (socialist in words, imperialist in deeds), which began contending for world domination with U.S. imperialism.

In response, the former colonized countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (the Third World), which includes countries of various social systems ranging from fascist to socialist, have begun a gradual process of uniting amongst themselves and, in turn, with the world's intermediate capitalist countries (the Second World), for the purpose of isolating the two imperialist superpowers and thus preventing either of them from directly and completely dominating any Third or Second World country. In general, these still somewhat halting attempts at unity on the part of the Third and Second Worlds have dealt real blows against U.S. imperialism, as indicated above. However, because the majority of Third World countries have still not come to recognize the social-imperialist nature of the Soviet Union, that country has retained the ability to penetrate numerous Third World countries in a manner and to an extent no longer possible for the United States. For that reason, and also because the Soviet Union is an imperialist power on the rise while the U.S. is an imperialist power in a state of decline, the Soviet Union is the more dangerous of the two superpowers and thus the principal source of a new World War.

In other words, though the U.S.'s internal economic conditions may not dictate the necessity of imperialist war at this time, an overproduction/underconsumption crisis in the Soviet Union or certain economic, political or military actions on the part of various Third and/or Second World countries could nonetheless drive U.S. imperialism into one of several types of conflicts: a war by proxy with the Soviet Union (for example, in the Middle East or Southern Africa), a direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union, or a direct or indirect conflict with one or several Third and/or Second World countries bent on independence and liberation from imperialist domination.

The fact that the Soviet Union is the principal source of a new World War can in no way be employed as a rationale for the American people supporting U.S. imperialism against Soviet social-imperialism. Quite the contrary. The American people can best prevent the U.S. from either initiating or being drawn into imperialist war by overthrowing monopoly capitalism in the U.S., thereby eliminating the material (economic) basis of both U.S. imperialism and U.S. involvement in imperialist war (not to mention the source of the American people's own oppression).

Such, in brief, are the objective conditions internationally and in the U.S. and the resulting task confronting the American people.

The question now arises: does the American people's subjective view of reality correspond to the above objective conditions? In other words, do the American people comprehend the current situation internationally and in the U.S., and are the American people aware of the resulting task confronting them? In order to provide the basis for answering those questions, it is first of all necessary to clarify the relationship of (and the difference between) objective and subjective conditions.

"In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." ^{2/}

Social being, then, (the objective conditions) comprises the conditions in which one exists, while social consciousness (the subjective conditions) is the product of existing in those objective conditions. Thus, the objective conditions

^{2/} Karl Marx A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970) pp. 20-21

are a society's economic base and the superstructure arising therefrom. The economic base determines the various relations among people and thus the class structure of society. The superstructure provides ideological justification for said class structure (legally, morally, socially, etc.) through all available consciousness-shaping means, and concrete, material protection for the class or classes in power (politically and militarily) through the armed apparatus called the state.

However, though both are aspects of the objective conditions, the economic base and the superstructure must not be viewed as equal. In other words, one of them has to be playing the principal and decisive role in shaping mass social consciousness. ^{3/}

Despite the above qualification, however, social consciousness is still generally determined by social being. Therefore, it seemingly follows that as soon as the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production--in other words, as soon as a revolutionary situation arises in the economic base of society--mass revolutionary consciousness should immediately and automatically arise. Unfortunately, however, the development of mass revolutionary consciousness is neither immediate nor automatic. Why?

"If the masses alone are active without a strong leading group to organize their activity properly, such activity cannot be sustained for long, or carried forward in the right direction, or raised to a higher level." ^{4/}

In the absence of leadership, in other words, the masses only grasp the appearance of things, not their essence. Thus, for example, while able to spontaneously rise against the various effects of the revolutionary situation in a society's economic base, the leaderless masses are not able to rise in an organized fashion for the purpose of resolving the revolutionary situation itself. So objective conditions or "social existence" notwithstanding, a necessary subjective prerequisite for revolution is a strong leading group to impart revolutionary consciousness to the masses.

^{3/} Mao Tsetung "On Contradiction" Selected Readings (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1971) P. 116

^{4/} Mao Tsetung "Concerning Methods of Leadership" Selected Readings (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1971) pp. 288-289

Let us now apply the above to the U.S.

Though there exists a revolutionary situation in the U.S.'s economic base (the private appropriation of the profits of socialized labor), and U.S. imperialism is in a state of decline, the subjective view of reality of all classes and strata comprising the American people does not yet correspond to those objective conditions. For example, in the realm of foreign affairs, a majority of the American people still oppose the U.S. relinquishing control of the Panama Canal and withdrawing from South Korea and Taiwan. To do so, the American people have been led to believe, would be a sign of weakness and would lower American standing around the world. Of course, the reality of the situation is quite the opposite: American withdrawal from foreign locations where American presence is not necessary for the defense of the U.S. or the independence of the location in question would considerably enhance American standing with a majority of the world's countries.

Domestically, the masses of the American people are far from satisfied with the present situation, but the more or less collective demands presently being put forward by the American masses are merely reformist in nature, not radical or revolutionary (full employment, higher wages, lower taxes, better health care and education, more personal freedom, tighter control of big business, nationalization of selected industries, the elimination of political and corporate corruption, etc.). Most importantly, the level of class consciousness of the American proletariat is not yet such that it can distinguish itself as a class from the rest of the people--meaning that the American proletariat does not yet see the need for its own political party and is not yet calling for socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What is the principal cause of this state of affairs?

As we have seen, the economic base and the superstructure combine to determine mass social consciousness in a particular society. Thus, in the U.S., mass social consciousness is the product of monopoly capitalism and its attendant superstructure. However, as indicated above as well, one or the other--i.e., either the economic base or its attendant superstructure--has to be playing the principal and decisive role in determining mass social consciousness in the U.S. Without question, the economic base was of principal importance in shaping mass social consciousness in the U.S. prior to the development and spread of the country's extremely vast and influential audio/visual communications industry in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Since the early 1950s, however, the thing playing the principal and decisive role in shaping mass social consciousness in the U.S.

(and thus holding back the development of the masses' political consciousness and the proletariat's class consciousness) has been the ideological war waged by the class in power (the monopoly capitalists) against the masses of the people in general and the proletariat in particular for the purpose of maintaining the status quo.

This ideological war has three basic features: 1) it employs bourgeois-democratic illusions to perpetuate the hope of achieving individual success under monopoly capitalism (or what is euphemistically referred to as the "free enterprise system"); 2) it employs anti-communism to perpetuate fear of even mildly radical change; and 3) it employs chauvinism to perpetuate division among the people along sexual, racial, national and religious lines.

Bourgeois-democratic illusions are the by-product of petty privileges accorded the upper strata of the working class and minor social and political reforms accorded the entire people. As is well known, the material basis for the petty privileges is the superprofits of imperialism. The minor reforms are designed to complement the anti-communism. That is, peaceful reforms within the context of bourgeois democracy (a system falsely equated with freedom and personal liberty) are cynically employed as ammunition in the ceaseless ideological onslaught against communism (a system falsely equated with slavery and the absence of personal liberty). Chauvinism gives rise to a certain stratum of the people holding another stratum responsible for the social, economic and political oppression all strata of the people are subject to. Widely disseminated through all available consciousness-shaping means (T.V., radio, newspapers, motion pictures, the educational system, the Church, etc.), bourgeois-democratic illusions, anti-communism and chauvinism are all holding back the development of mass revolutionary consciousness in the U.S. In summary, then, neither the completed democratic revolution nor the subsequent socialist revolution will occur in the U.S. unless and until bourgeois-democratic illusions, anti-communism and chauvinism are at least neutralized to a very significant degree.

Without question, the neutralization of bourgeois-democratic illusions, anti-communism and chauvinism presupposes the existence of a political party fostering the development of mass revolutionary consciousness. Part II of this work discusses the history and present state of the American movement attempting to build such a party.