

**The following seven part article was published in The Guardian in February-March, 1990**

**The Guardian, No. 519, 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1990**

**Perestroika -- A Balance Sheet (part 1)**

**by Peter Symon**

**General Secretary Socialist Party of Australia**

This is the first article in a series dealing with some of the current developments taking place in East European socialist countries and the Soviet Union. Other articles will appear in following issues of [The Guardian].

Day by day the Western mass media is keeping up its torrent of anti-communist propaganda proclaiming ever more stridently and enthusiastically the death of socialism and communism. One Sydney daily produced a placard which said, "Communists defeated, Gorby wins", overlooking the "little" fact that Gorbachev is the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and that in his report to the recent Central Committee (CC) meeting he declared that "the pivot of the proposed platform is the approach to solving immediate and strategic tasks of Soviet society along the lines of renewing socialism. We remain committed to the choice made in October 1917, to the socialist idea." Furthermore, the decisions of the meeting were taken either unanimously or with little opposition.

However, it would be foolish to pretend that there have not been considerable setbacks and that socialism in a number of East European countries will be dismantled if the present governments of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and perhaps others continue with their declared policies.

The restructuring so far undertaken in the Soviet Union has also not produced the promised and expected results. The Soviet Union is facing severe and sharp economic decline and confusion, a social malaise such as has not been seen in the Soviet Union for more than 60 years, a dramatic decline in the prestige of the CPSU and confusion within it.

A medley of political forces including nationalist, racist and fascist elements are on rise.

It is no use closing ones eyes to this reality which is not an invention of the Western media, but is confirmed in speeches to the recent meeting of the CC.

The error of the Western media is in the conclusion that socialism and communism are finished, that Marxism does not work and that the world would be better off if everyone lived under a capitalist economic and political system.

It is timely to make something of a balance sheet and to discuss some issues. It may be possible to draw some conclusions as to why these developments are taking place.

When Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the CPSU in 1985, the state of affairs was far from satisfactory. Many problems had accumulated in the economy and in political life. Bureaucracy was rampant.

The scientific and technological revolution had not been applied to industry. There were many black spots in the countryside.

None-the-less, the Party's position was not challenged and even in stagnation there was a certain stability -- and the shops were not empty.

## **Not thinking it through first**

The policies of restructuring and openness were adopted. They called for sweeping changes in every area of life.

No-one could be against the necessity of change and nearly everyone was for perestroika and glasnost. The real question was and remains -- what are the nature of the changes to be and what are the consequences of the policies adopted? Will they improve things or make them worse?

One of the first measures taken in the social and economic field was the ban on alcohol. Although this was sometime ago and it has now been largely forgotten it is a good illustration of a gimmicky, ill-thought-through measure.

Firstly, it could never have succeeded. Prohibition has never worked in any country and this should have been known.

It lost the government enormous sums in revenue (one estimate put the figure at 40 billion roubles) and this loss contributed to huge budget deficits.

But, perhaps, even worse, it financed the underground economy, made millionaires out of those operating on the black market, fostering corruption and crime. At the recent CC meeting, Gorbachev spoke openly of the "mafia". The attempt to ban alcohol helped them along.

An intense debate on many other issues of economic policy still rages -- five years after the commencement of perestroika.

This might be said to be a welcome exercise in democracy but while the debate rages the shelves are becoming bare.

The confusion and indecision are revealed in the following statement by Nikolai Slyunkov, a member of the Politburo of the CPSU who said at last week's CC meeting that a "way out of the serious economic situation lay in deregulation and establishing sufficiently tough market competition.

"In addition, regulation of prices, taxes and credit interests by the State is needed."

He also called for measures to "step up control over financial bodies, tax inspection and pricing". (emphasis added)

Well, which is it to be? Deregulation and a "market" economy or regulation and control?

The answer to this obvious contradiction will probably determine whether the Soviet Union finds the way to pull the economy together based on the principles and aspirations of socialism or plunges the economy into deeper and deeper crisis and anarchy as it turns more and more in a capitalist direction.

The consequences of this course are already to be seen in Poland and Hungary -- runaway inflation, unemployment, soup kitchens and the loss of economic control to the transnational corporations and the banks of the West.

The political consequences include the loss of political independence and may well see a return to some extreme right-wing, even fascist governments.

But how and why do such contradictions arise in the minds of leaders of a communist party with vast experience and enormous achievements to its credit? We shall attempt to give an answer to this question after some other issues have been examined.

## **Democracy is not anarchy**

It has been claimed that the economic problems could not be solved until society was democratised. At the recent meeting of the CC, problems of democratisation of the state and the party were top of the agenda.

For the people, the main things they may want to hear about are the supply of goods in the shops, prices, getting things done at work and social stability.

At a recent meeting of workers in Moscow this demand came through strongly. Workers want order and discipline, they want to be able to get on with their work with a clear direction to follow. They do not want to be messed around with confused and contradictory messages and instructions.

None-the-less, democratic practices are very important, but democracy seems to have been interpreted in very simplistic terms; virtually as the right for everyone to say and do as they please without responsibility or consideration of the consequences and without having any higher objective in mind.

But this is anarchy not democracy. It would lead to the dissolution of any society which tried that path -- capitalist as well as socialist.

Democracy is a form of rule which serves a particular end. The bourgeois democratic state has been forced over the years to grant certain rights but it also limits them so as to protect the rule and the interests of the capitalist ruling class.

Capitalism does not permit anarchy, nor does it sit idly by whenever a challenge to its rule arises.

Democracy in a socialist society must do the same. It must protect and serve socialism and the rule of the working class.

## **It is a question of power**

Democracy is not a free for all and is connected with winning and holding political power.

Vladimir Kryuchkov said at the CC meeting that "the ideological character of different forces has been clearly revealed lately -- from left radical, social democratic, to openly

nationalistic, anti-communist and even monarchist ideas. Many of them have destructive, anti-socialist aims in common.

“Earlier, they pretended to support perestroika. Now they are openly striving to seize power. They use moral terror and threaten to eliminate government and party officials, people who disagree with them”.

Kryuchkov called for “political methods to solve problems”, but at the same time, called for adoption of a law “banning extremist organisations and those calling for extremist acts”.

This will be vociferously denounced by those banned as a violation of their democratic rights. This is what the Azerbaijani nationalists did when the Soviet army intervened and stopped the anti-Armenian pogroms.

It was their democratic right to soak Armenians in petrol and set them alight -- or so they seemed to think.

In Moscow anti-Semitism is on the increase and Jewish pogroms are being threatened by the fascist [Pamyat] organisation. Can this be permitted in the name of democracy?

The Soviet Union gained great prestige for its struggle against racist Nazism and progressives were heartened when the USSR became the first to include clauses in its Constitution banning racism and incitement to war. It was a great example.

Democracy is necessary for socialism, but it must serve socialism and not fascism or capitalism.

Unfortunately there are many who do not seem to know this Leninist concept of democracy. Many journalists writing in the press of socialist countries seem to be motivated by anarchistic notions of democracy, sensationalism and considerable irresponsibility.

Openly racist and anti-communist newspapers are being published. In the name of democracy, democracy could well be overthrown. Some journalists, who should be guiding and clarifying what is needed, are adding to the confusion and the malaise.

!Part II of the series “Perestroika -- a balance sheet” will follow next week.!

## **The Guardian, No. 520, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1990**

### **Perestroika -- A Balance Sheet (Part II)**

Another aspect of the situation is the role being played by some so-called intellectuals who have failed to understand the needs of the times but who claim an exalted position as the leaders of society simply because of their academic qualifications.

Mikhail Gorbachev strongly criticised the role played by some intellectuals in Azerbaijan and Armenia. He said that, “unfortunately, many representatives of the intelligentsia in Azerbaijan and Armenia failed to correctly assess the situation, find the real causes of the conflict and exert a positive influence on developments.”

Some examples will illustrate the nonsense being written. Oleg Shakhnazarov a leading researcher at the Research Centre of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions writes:

“Changes at the basis of bourgeois society show that the self-regulation of capitalist reproduction is beginning to negate the exploitation of man by man...

“Coming to light is the latent depth of the idea of the primacy of supraclass interests which underlies new political thinking ... private and socialised means of production are not antipodes but just different forms of ownership.” ([International Affairs July 1989, pp 91-2)

Vladimir Stupishin [D. Sc (Hist)] and the Chief Councillor in a department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs writes that “there are no more proletarians, at any rate in the East and West of Europe.

“There are workers, farmers, employees, businessmen, professionals, clergymen, students, pensioners, children, servicemen. Their common interest is to live in peace and survive and to preserve their common European home.

“Therefore it would seem the time has come for the slogan ‘Workers of all countries, unite!’ to be withdrawn from our state banners.” (Ibid. p 34)

With such ideas in leading circles it is not surprising that internationalism and working class solidarity has all but disappeared from the vocabulary of many these days and is disappearing in practice as well.

## **Role of intellectuals**

Intellectuals have a choice. They can (and should) play a leading part in the construction of socialism, in the progressive and democratic cultural development of society, in education and science. Or they can take up the role of allies of the capitalist class.

In some socialist countries there is an impression that the working class is being displaced as the ruling class by groupings of intellectuals in the form of advisers, researchers and journalists in the mass media where they mould public opinion.

They are becoming associated with and even leading new political formations which are not committed to a better socialism but advocate in more or less open terms the restoration of capitalism.

These are the embryo of what will become full-blown petty-bourgeois and eventually bourgeois parties as these social classes become re-established. These developments are taking place under the slogans of “choice” and “democracy”.

## **“Non-class” theories**

It appears that such people are the initiators of often ill-considered and non-class policies and theories behind some of the current acute problems.

To cover up the real direction of their thinking and actions they find it necessary to blame everything on personalities from the past, to denigrate and blacken the past as though nothing was achieved.

The “entrepreneurs” and those who set up private enterprises either in industry or agriculture will inevitably become interested in making profits. Little capitalists usually aspire to become big capitalists.

The ideology of capitalism will multiply and, together with intellectuals, non-socialist or anti-socialist ideas, threaten working class power and socialism.

The various “democratic forums” and “democratic unions” which sprang into prominence in the East European socialist countries are largely made up of intellectuals.

They claim to be interested in establishing democratic regimes, but it is just such people in Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Baltic Republics who either led or capitulated to the nationalist hysteria and the atmosphere of pogroms that their exhortations generated.

The spectacle of the heavy blows being struck against the communist and workers parties of Eastern Europe seems to have been greeted with disinterest.

This has led to the virtual destruction of the Warsaw Treaty while NATO moves in. The prospect of a reunified capitalist Germany becoming a member of NATO seems to raise few concerns in the East. One retreat after another is taking place.

## **Danger of fascism**

If German reunification should happen on West German and NATO terms, we can say that all the sacrifices of the Soviet people and those of other nations in the struggle against Nazism (which was the extreme, aggressive expression of German imperialism) will have been thrown away. No wonder, a speaker at the CC meeting of the CPSU spoke of a new Munich.

James Baker, US Secretary of State, made clear who the master is going to be. He warned while in Czechoslovakia that the money for investments would be cut off if East European countries did not follow the economic and political course being mapped out for them by the US, West Germany and the other capitalist powers.

Those who imagine that being “European” will guarantee them favoured treatment will find in practice that capital does not differentiate between any race when it comes to making profits and establishing the control of the transnational corporations.

## **“Common European home”**

The concept of a “common European home”, irrespective of its justification as a means to eliminate Europe as a source of war, is rapidly turning into something else.

We are witnessing the formation of a united Europe with a capitalist system, imperialist in character and bent on re-establishing European colonialism on the rest of the world.

Third world leaders are beginning to sense this. Fidel Castro said so in no uncertain terms. After speaking of the savage exploitation of the third world countries he continued: “... imperialism is inviting the European socialist countries to join it in this colossal plunder -- an invitation which seems not to displease the theoreticians of capitalist reform.

“Thus, in many of those countries, no one speaks about the tragedy of the third world, and their discontented multitudes are guided towards capitalism and anti-communism -- and,

in one country, towards Pan-Germanism. Such developments may even lead to fascist trends.

“The prize promised by imperialism is a share of the plunder wrested from our peoples, the only way of building capitalist consumer societies.”

A similar state of affairs was observed in an article in the weekly magazine [Outlook published in China under the headline, “Third World shows concern over US-Soviet link”.

It gave as an example, the Soviet Union’s backing at the United Nation’s General Assembly last year of a US resolution on “periodic genuine elections”.

The article said that the Soviet Union had previously opposed such a resolution “because of its obvious intention of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and the imposition of its ideology and its social system upon others”. It claimed that the Soviet Union, “is taking sides with the US on more and more issues in the UN openly or covertly. Third World nations are watching such a shift of the Soviet stance with concern.”

## **Is the cold war really over?**

It may be claimed that the current policies are leading to a disarmed peaceful world. Bush and others have announced that the “cold war” was over, but Bush then invaded Panama. Politburo member Alexander Yakovlev said at the CC meeting: “It is a fact recognised all over the world that a huge leap to a peaceful future of entire humanity has been taken”.

In his speech to the CC, Mikhail Gorbachev was more objective. He said: “The situation in the world did improve in recent years, but the danger of war is still preserved.

“The doctrines and concepts of the United States and NATO, which are far from being defensive, remain in force. Their armies and military budgets have not changed.”

We need to look at the negatives as well as the undoubted positives which include progress in settling some local wars, the INF treaty, the removal of the enemy image and many unilateral disarmament measures by socialist countries. But there is another side which must not be overlooked or forgotten.

Armaments continue to pile up apace. Warheads from scrapped intermediate range missiles are being transferred to other delivery vehicles.

The defence spending of the US has not been significantly cut. Star Wars is going ahead. The US continues to refuse to discuss naval disarmament. Militarisation in the Asia-Pacific region is gathering pace.

Will a reunited Germany in NATO be a peaceful Germany? Who will guarantee that it will? Given a weakening of the socialist community, will the US be restrained in Central and Latin America?

Are the Israelis going to take a peaceful path and grant the Palestinians their statehood?

Will a united capitalist Europe, once again bent on imposing some form of colonialism on the rest of the world, act peacefully? Yes, of course, the US leaders are prepared to talk nicely now and even make concessions if it helps in the spreading of illusions, while the

destruction of the East European socialist societies and the weakening of the Soviet Union goes on.

For the time being the US leaders are attempting to lead the Soviet Union into a partnership in “solving” various problems. But in whose interests?

It was correctly claimed in the past that the achievement of parity with imperialism by the Soviet Union was a great historic achievement and that the united strength of the socialist states, the non-aligned nations and the world-wide peace movements were the barrier to war and imperialist aggression.

Isn't this barrier being dismantled as the reliable socialist governments are being replaced and the Warsaw Treaty is torn to shreds?

!The imperialist price for peace is the abandonment of socialism.!

Is this a price that some are contemplating paying? But even this is no guarantee of peace. The elimination of socialism may well see a return of the conflicts between the imperialist blocs. At best it would be peace with slavery.

!Part III of the series [Perestroika -- a balance sheet will follow next week.

## **The Guardian, No. 521, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1990**

### **Perestroika -- A balance sheet (part III)**

In some recent Soviet writings there are references cropping up to the “civilised world” and to “civilisation”, but it is not clear what is really meant.

Alexander Lukin, a researcher in the Chinese Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow commented that the Soviet Union “agreed to the shooting of a peaceful demonstration” in Beijing in June and goes on to say that “we shall again find ourselves all alone in the civilised world”. ([20<sup>th</sup> Century and Peace No 8 1989 p 4).

Apart from the fact that this researcher has swallowed the version of events in Beijing widely peddled by the Western media his reference to the “civilised world” is intriguing.

In his report to the recent meeting of the CPSU CC, Mikhail Gorbachev said that “we should abandon everything that led to the isolation of socialist countries from the mainstream of world civilisation”.

We have always been of the opinion that despite its blemishes and “uncivilised” acts that, far from the socialist world being outside of civilisation, it was the banner-bearer of a civilised social and economic system.

By bringing the working class to power, socialism created the conditions for the prosperity and security of the great majority -- and much was achieved. The shortcomings were not the fault of socialism but the distortions that some individuals perpetuated.

It was the Soviet Union and the communists who made the greatest sacrifices in the historic world struggle against Nazism. The communists of France whose party became known as the “party of the executed” and those of Czechoslovakia and other East

European countries fought and usually led the guerilla struggle against the Nazi occupation.

How could socialist countries be regarded as outside the “mainstream of civilisation” when they have been the consistent advocates of disarmament and opponents of nuclear war. The proposal for “peaceful coexistence” is a profoundly civilised idea.

But let us turn this question around. If the socialist states are not civilised, who is? Who is being referred to as comprising the “mainstream of world civilisation”? And who are the “uncivilised”, or not part of the mainstream?

## **The “civilised” world**

The first writer quoted, Alexander Lukin, obviously excludes China from the civilised world. Who else?

One gets the disturbing impression from events and from these and other statements that the civilised world is seen to be Europe, plus the USA and Canada.

At this critical crossroads in history, it is as well for everyone to examine their conscience and to ask whether some are being excluded by virtue of their skin colour, their distance from Europe or their status as former colonies of the European imperialist powers.

If Europe and North America are regarded as the mainstream of civilisation it is as well to remember the not so old Nazi gas chambers, the My-Lai massacre in Vietnam, the uncontrolled slaughter in North Korea in the 1950s, the many local wars fuelled by imperialist supplied arms, etc.

But to return to the original point. Socialism is the mainstream of civilisation -- not capitalism. The task is by social transformation to pass, as Engels wrote, “from the age of barbarism to the age of civilisation” throughout the whole world.

## **Socialism is the mainstream of civilisation**

The progress towards civilisation is related to social systems, to economic and social principles, objectives and values and is not the possession of any one race or geographical area.

In the previous article we quoted Vladimir Stupishin who recommended that the slogan “Workers of all countries, unite”, be abandoned.

The question of proletarian internationalism continues to come up in various ways.

Vladimir Orel a leading figure in the Soviet Peace Committee writing for the [Peace Courier which is published by the Information Centre of the World Peace Council (WPC) says:

“The ideology, politics, organisational and financial resources of the ‘socialist camp ‘ have been one of the main pillars on which the basic concepts of the WPC have stood. This pillar no longer exists.

“Some cannot conceal their disappointment with the ‘revision’ and even ‘betrayal’ of the principle of international solidarity, taken for granted in the form of one-way political, moral and material support from socialist countries...

“Hasn’t the time come to reciprocate with at least understanding and solidarity for the democratic forces in the socialist countries.” ([Peace Courier 1/90, p 2)

When Vladimir Orel says that “this pillar no longer exists” it is not clear whether he is referring to the undermining of socialism going on in European socialist countries or to a weakening of internationalism and solidarity. Perhaps both.

But it is necessary to take up the assertion that solidarity has been a one-way street flowing only from the socialist countries.

## **Solidarity -- a two-way street**

Solidarity by the socialist countries is acknowledged by all. Recognition and appreciation of this has been expressed many times, not only by communists but by the national liberation movements and working class organisations everywhere.

At the same time, solidarity has been extended in the other direction -- to the socialist countries. For 70 years the main target of imperialism has been the Soviet Union and much has been done by socialists and communists in all countries in support of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

When the imperialist powers imposed the war of intervention shortly after the Russian revolution of 1917, the British seamen refused to load arms for this intervention and helped to stop it.

In other countries, including Australia, “Hands off Russia” campaigns were organised.

The Socialist Party’s program says on this matter that:

“Working class internationalism demands solidarity with socialist countries as the main decisive force in the struggle for peace and democracy. The defence of socialism and the further consolidation and unification of socialist countries and the world communist and workers’ movement is an important international duty of all.” ([Program of the Socialist Party of Australia p65)

Vladimir Orel calls for understanding and solidarity with the democratic forces in the socialist countries. We do not know of anyone who does not support the processes of socialist democratisation, but the question is muddled by the fact that some who are claiming to be “democratic forces” are calling for the re-establishment of capitalism.

This, as we know from our own experience, means the control of big companies over the economy and at best, limited forms of political democracy.

## **De-ideologisation**

Another question is raised by a proposal to “de-ideologise” relations between states. Let’s see how this theory works out.

Last year Yugoslavia extended diplomatic recognition to south Korea claiming that the previous policy had been based on “ideology”.

Before this switch the Yugoslav government had declared that “the establishment of diplomatic relations with south Korea would not contribute to the peaceful reunification of Korea but only help attempts to perpetuate division”.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) newspaper, [Rodong Sinmun], says of the change that “The Yugoslav authorities have thrown away their communist obligation and conscience by having relations with the south Korean puppets”.

The change in the Yugoslav government’s position is a consequence of “de-ideologising” foreign policy.

This idea is not a new one. As far back as 1984 [A Dictionary of Scientific Communism described this theory as “a bourgeois concept used to oppose Marxist-Leninist ideology and to undermine the ideological foundations of the socialist system. “Its adherents describe ideology as a false view of the world, distorting reality and serving a certain group of persons as a means for attaining definite political objectives.”

De-ideologisation means an abandonment of Marxism-Leninism in analysis of international relations and adoption of the necessary responses appropriate to a socialist state. If Marxism-Leninism is abandoned what ideology is to be our guide?

There is no such thing as an ideological void or ideological neutrality. If Marxism-Leninism goes out the window, bourgeois ideology comes in the door. One has only to read the statements coming from some commentators and politicians in socialist countries to find proof of that. Of course, the leaders of the imperialist states are not so foolish as to abandon their ideological and class position.

The theory of de-ideologisation ignores the fact that there are two social systems in the world -- socialism and capitalism -- and that there is a continuing conflict of interests between the capitalist class and the working class.

The advocates of de-ideologisation have stopped talking about imperialism and would have everyone believe that capitalism has been transformed into “people’s capitalism” and that imperialism really has a human face or no longer exists.

Those who ignore the reality and abandon a class approach which entails solidarity and internationalism with other socialist states and with the working class and national liberation movements of all countries will soon find themselves in the company of strange partners.

In the case of Yugoslavia, it sees no shame in recognising the military fascist puppet regime of south Korea, and in practice, abandoning its solidarity with the DPRK in the struggle for the reunification of Korea bringing an end to the US military occupation of the south.

The government of Hungary is following the same line when it holds discussions with the apartheid regime of South Africa and has the temerity to claim that this helps the black people in their struggle against apartheid. This approach sounds remarkably similar to that of Maggie Thatcher. The Hungarian view was not shared by the ANC which denounced the move.

The DPRK newspaper charges the Yugoslav government with “betrayal”. Is that too harsh a word?

**The Guardian, No. 522, 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1990**

## **Perestroika -- A Balance Sheet (part IV)**

In all the East European countries and the Soviet Union, the question of the role of the party has been widely discussed. This is also a focal point for the Western mass media in their anti-communist campaigns. They are well aware that the political and organisational role played by the communist and workers' parties is of decisive importance.

The reactionary circles know that if they can knock the parties off course they will have gone a long way to undermining socialism in those countries where the socialist system has been established. In the remaining capitalist countries the disruption of the revolutionary parties is a sure way of preventing a challenge to the capitalist system or at least decapitating the spontaneous resistance movements which inevitably arise.

The West is quite right in giving this question such importance. Hence their delight at the difficulties that have overtaken the parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

There is no doubt that a number of the parties did not do their job well and have contributed substantially to the present mass criticism. But once again it is necessary to recognise the very great achievements of the parties of the socialist countries and that basically they did serve the interests of the people.

The shortcomings demand correction and not the liquidation of the parties or the abandonment of socialism. It will not take long before the disastrous consequences of liquidation, retreat and opportunism which are now apparent, are felt by the working people.

### **Consequences of retreat**

It is already being seen in Poland where mass unemployment, 1,000 per cent inflation, and poverty are returning as the "market economy" policies of the Solidarity led government and the IMF (which is now making the big decisions about the Polish economy) begin to bite.

The question of the role of parties has often concentrated on the articles in the constitutions of a number of socialist countries which enshrined the leading role of the party. This is not the real issue.

The leading role of parties did not need to be and should not have been treated in this way. The removal of this clause from the constitutions will permit the real questions to be argued out.

### **Leadership must be won**

The parties have to win their political spurs by correct policies and dedicated hard work. It is often said that the party's leading role has to be won and not merely proclaimed. This is correct and this principle should never be lost sight of.

However, quite often, under the cloak of this correct assertion a position is adopted which amounts to the denial of the need for a Marxist party at all.

This is the position taken by the leadership of the Communist Party of Australia. Years ago the party leadership started off by criticising the concept of the leading role citing a number of shortcomings, bureaucracy, etc. The next step was to downgrade the party to being “just another party” and finally, the step of liquidation altogether. This is what has happened in Australia.

Similar arguments have been put forward in the East European countries and some of the parties have quickly moved to the point of liquidation. There will be disastrous consequences in any country where this course is followed and the working class will eventually not forgive those who abandoned and betrayed their responsibilities.

The role of the party is also mixed up with the question of whether or not there is a multi-party system. There is no dogma about this. Some socialist countries have a one-party situation. In others there is a multi-party system. In both cases the party must work democratically with others, involve the people in political life and, where there is a coalition of parties, involve those parties effectively in government. In some of the socialist countries where there was a multi-party system, the coalition partners were neglected or taken for granted.

## **Nature of system fundamental**

However, in every country whether capitalist or socialist the fundamental question is the nature of the system and not whether there is one or more parties. The political parties and the form of government (parliamentary or some other form) are only the superstructure.

In capitalist society governments come and go. Sometimes there are dictatorships while at other times democratic forms prevail. But none of these changes alter the fundamental capitalist nature of the economic and political system. We see this going on in Australia.

In socialist countries the same is true. The fundamental is the economic system while the political parties and forms of government serve the economic base.

What is different now in Eastern Europe is that parties have come into existence and are forming governments which intend to change the fundamental nature of the socialist system and revert to capitalism. Such forces are beginning to come into existence in the Soviet Union as well.

The real nature of the political organisations coming into existence does not seem to be sufficiently understood. Some are openly advocating a capitalist restoration. The Solidarity government in Poland and the new governments in Czechoslovakia and Hungary are openly advocating this. If a social democratic government is elected in the GDR it will also proceed in this direction.

## **Role of party**

Only those who are wilfully blind can ignore this reality. Whether they succeed is another matter. It will depend to a large degree on the firmness of the existing communist party leaderships. The tasks of those who are pushing for a capitalist restoration will be made easier if the communist parties are weakened or even destroyed.

Not only the millstones of the past but the confusion, lack of vision, startling lack of theory and downright incompetence of some present party leaderships have helped to create the dangerous situation that has now emerged.

What does the SPA have in mind in Australia? The SPA's program anticipates a multi-party system in the period of transition to socialism.

In calling for a government of People's Unity it says that such a government would comprise "the political representatives of all the progressive, democratic and patriotic forces from socialist and labour circles, from trade unions and progressive community organisations, from small working farmers, professional and middle class circles". (SPA Program p 40)

At the same time, the SPA does not have in mind burying the party or liquidating it.

The separation of party from the state is another issue about which there is a lot of talk and confusion.

## **State-party relations**

It was wrong that in some socialist countries the party virtually duplicated the apparatus of government and in the management of the economy. This became the source of bureaucracy and interference in the work of those who had specific responsibilities in the various departments of government and the economy.

However, once again, there is a danger of swinging from one extreme to the other. The state apparatus in every society and the economy serves the interests of the class in power. The political parties which form governments see to it that those who are appointed in the state apparatus administer the interests of the ruling class.

A socialist state must see to it that those persons who will loyally serve the interests of the working class are appointed to leading government positions.

Consequently, the proposal to separate the party from the state does not mean an abandonment of leadership and responsibility by the party. Interference and stifling bureaucracy should end but not leadership.

Attempts to eliminate the leadership of the communist party in every sphere are not new. Following the socialist revolution in Russia in 1917 such attempts came out into the open at the time of the Kronstadt uprising in Leningrad in 1921 when some who criticised the Bolsheviks for their "errors" came up with the slogan of "Soviets without Bolsheviks".

Space does not allow for anything more than a reproduction of the views of Lenin about this mutiny which has some remarkable similarity to some political events today.

Lenin said of the Kronstadt mutiny that, "It was an attempt to seize political power from the Bolsheviks by a motley crew or alliance of ill-assorted elements, apparently just to the right of the Bolsheviks, or perhaps even to their 'left' ...

"There is evidence of the activity of petty-bourgeois anarchist elements with their slogans of unrestricted trade [market economics today, PS] and invariable hostility to the dictatorship of the proletariat ...

“The Kronstadt sailors and workers wanted to correct the Bolsheviks in regard to restrictions in trade -- and this looks like a small shift, which leaves the slogans of ‘Soviet power’ with ever so slight a change or correction.

Yet, in actual fact the whiteguards only used the non-Party elements as a stepping stone to get in. This is politically inevitable”. (Lenin Collected Works Vol 32 p 184)

Lenin went on, “Behind a facade of workers’ slogans (the bourgeoisie) is trying to incite the petty-bourgeois anarchist elements against the workers. This, if successful, will lead directly to the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the restoration of capitalism and of the old landowner and capitalist regime”. (Ibid p 185)

“I emphasised the danger of Kronstadt because it lies precisely in the fact that the change demanded was apparently very slight: ‘The Bolsheviks must go ... we will correct the regime a little’. But what actually happened ... a whiteguard general appeared on the scene”. (Ibid p 204)

Those who want to throw out the Bolsheviks today in Eastern Europe will find that they will soon be replaced by the transnational corporations, the World Bank and the Wehrmacht, with some new Hitler waiting in the wings. Some people never learn but others should know the lessons of history.

## **The Guardian, No. 523, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1990**

### **Perestroika -- A balance sheet (Part V)**

The SPA welcomed the stated objectives of perestroika. There was much in the economic, political and social practices of socialist countries and their communist parties which demanded correction. The objective of a “better socialism” could not but be supported. However, the objective is one thing, its attainment is another.

Sufficient time has now elapsed to see whether this aim is in the process of being achieved.

### **The Economy**

Many changes have been introduced. These included greater autonomy for industries, the encouragement of local initiative, involvement of work collectives in the management of enterprises, introduction of cost accounting, attempts to overcome an egalitarian distortion in the payment of wages and, most importantly, the diversification of forms of property.

In the international economic field, talk began around proposals for the Soviet Union and other socialist states to join the IMF, the World Bank and other international trade organisations, making currencies convertible, adopting world prices, etc.

The economies of the European socialist states are still in transition but, at this stage, there has been a sharp deterioration in their economic position.

Production has decreased and the stability of currencies has been undermined. The black market has grown, profiteering by budding “entrepreneurs” re-emerged and, in some of the East European socialist states, prices have gone through the roof.

The concept of “market forces” economics has become fashionable. This implies a weakening or abandonment of central planning, a loosening or abandonment of price control, a swing towards private property and a chase after “hard currency”.

Firm economic principles do not seem to have been adopted. A socialist economy can only remain socialist if the major part of resources, transport, communications, industry and agriculture remains publicly owned with production serving the needs of the people and not the profit interests of private owners.

This principle has not been stated unequivocally in the Soviet Union, and in Poland and Czechoslovakia the governments have announced that there will be no limits on private ownership. Their economies are shifting from socialism towards capitalism and will continue in that direction unless the present trends are reversed.

The evils of capitalism are already reappearing with mass unemployment, impoverishment, high inflation, bankruptcies and burgeoning international indebtedness as the import of foreign capital is encouraged.

A socialist government must maintain the economic and political independence of the country and the socialist character of society by insisting that public ownership remain predominant with strict controls over prices, foreign investments, currency exchange, imports and exports, etc, and political control by the left/progressive political parties committed to socialism. This is not happening in Eastern Europe.

!Far from socialism being strengthened it is weakened.!

## **The political forces**

The character of the political forces which have come into existence in this period needs to be analysed. Some have allowed themselves to become euphoric about the mass demonstrations which have taken place and see this only as a welcome democratic expression.

It is an undeniable fact that tens of thousands demonstrated for justified demands which should have been attended to long before matters reached the stage of mass protests.

It is also a fact that political forces which do not have a commitment to a “better socialism” were also involved and have assumed the leadership in a number of the countries.

The political groups and parties being formed are based on the middle class and the intelligentsia. They do not have a Marxist ideology nor socialist policies. This is to be seen most clearly in the GDR where the parties being formed are associated with similar parties in West Germany.

We have also seen the incredible spectacle of leading West German politicians, including Chancellor Kohl, holding election rallies in the GDR with the East German authorities being unable to prevent this violation of their sovereignty.

The development of a market forces economy will again bring into existence a capitalist class which socialism had all but destroyed, although its remnants both inside and outside the socialist countries continued to plot and plan their restoration.

The US leaders know exactly what they are doing when, to use Henry Kissinger's words, they "propose to support and perhaps to finance those changes in the SU's economic structure which will make it more compatible with Western practices and values".

He specifically mentions support for small businesses, the private sector in agriculture and new service industries. The purpose is to re-create in the Soviet Union a capitalist oriented class as the necessary basis for the re-establishment of capitalism at some future time.

The recently adopted Platform of the Central Committee of the CPSU calls for a "plan-market economy based on a diversity of property forms".

It mentions the transformation of state property into property that will be democratically controlled by workers themselves on the basis of leasing, full cost-accounting, contracts, joint-stock and other modern forms. It says exploitation of man by man is not to be permitted.

Although exploitation is ruled out here, some forms of cooperatives already set up contradict this declaration. Furthermore, some of the political forces now coming into existence in the Soviet Union and winning public positions do not accept such restrictions and want to speed up the process towards a market economy.

Many who are so ready to destroy the "old" and try something "new" do not take into account that the "market" will install a new ruling class which will not be inclined to "democratically" give up its wealth, privileges and power. Anyone who lives in a capitalist country knows this.

## **Foreign affairs**

There has been a relaxation of international tension and scientists have moved the "doomsday" clock backwards from six minutes to midnight to ten minutes to midnight. Good:

But is this due to a real change in the substance of the international situation or due more to a fascination in the changes taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? Why should NATO flex its military muscle when it is achieving its objectives peacefully?

However, the US and NATO are maintaining their military presence in Europe and throughout the world -- just in case.

In this period there have been some decidedly negative developments.

The Warsaw Pact has been virtually destroyed as the East European countries change direction. Their armies, which were part of the defence against imperialist threats, are being disintegrated. Soviet forces are getting out.

The GDR is on the road to being swallowed by West Germany under the banner of reunification. It is likely to be incorporated into NATO which is not being dismantled.

The communist parties of these countries which were the core of the struggle against fascism and the guiding force in the construction of socialism in the post-war period have been all but destroyed.

International solidarity is being discounted not only out of economic constraints but by way of a definite change of emphasis. While the "enemy image" is being dispelled for the

moment, are former friendships being dispelled? Some of those who write articles in Soviet publications have gone a long way to reverse the positions of “enemy” and “friend”. All this has happened in a very short space of time under the banner of “new thinking”.

Can anyone honestly claim that these developments represent a strengthening of socialism which was the main barrier to war, the main force for peace and disarmament?

## **Cultural sphere**

In the important cultural sphere, individualism is given free reign. Film-makers often display an “one-eyed” approach, painting a relentlessly black picture of Soviet society and its history.

Their works pretend a concern for the “sufferings” of the Soviet working people but, in fact, promote anti-working class attitudes. Soviet life is portrayed as degraded and hopeless, peopled by drunks, prostitutes, delinquents and criminals.

The undeniable achievements of socialism are denounced and derided. The revolutionary past is redefined and re-written in terms of individual psychology, failed hopes, cynicism and betrayal.

It presents those who fought and struggled for socialism as naive idealists, dupes of leaders who are now characterised as “gangsters” (or “clowns” depending on the individual writer).

Responsibility to the working class and progressive society has been replaced by the necessities of “self-financing”, that is, the need to make a profit. A populist approach of “give the public what it wants” is adopted as the way to make a buck (or a rouble).

But there have been public criticisms of sexism and poor taste as well as criticisms of the obscurantism and elitism of many of the current “artistic” offerings.

The failure to find a popular audience for these productions is the subject of lamentations in intellectual circles but is a good sign for those who have not forsaken their socialist values in the cultural fields.

It can be truthfully argued that the great merit of perestroika is the awakening of the people to mass action, to participation, to the necessity to think and argue out the rights and wrongs of the many political, economic, social and moral questions that have been forcefully raised.

This may prove to be of exceptional importance as socialist society cannot be built without a conscious and politically active population.

People must have their own experience and out of the bitter pills that many are going to swallow and out of the mire of accumulated stupidities may well come enlightenment.

But experience on its own is not enough. The lessons have to be learnt and this calls for very clear leadership and a scientific understanding of society. It is this factor that seems to be missing at present. Instead of clarity there is more and more confusion, splits, divisions and contradictions. Why?

In the final article an attempt will be made to find an answer to this question.

## **The Guardian, No. 524, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1990**

### **Perestroika -- A balance sheet (Part VI)**

What has been said so far shows that the objectives set under the titles of perestroika and glasnost were necessary and in many respects long overdue.

The pace of change has been rapid, but the actual direction of this change is the subject of much argument. The processes at work will continue to unfold for years to come before some new equilibrium and stability returns. Why has all this happened?

One would be bold (or foolhardy) to try to give final answers and it is not possible in one short article to mention all the many factors which have contributed to events. What is written now can only be tentative. Much more time is needed to properly explain some events.

#### **The past casts its shadow**

The past inevitably casts its shadow on the present of every nation. The past of the socialist countries includes not only the shortcomings of their construction of socialism (and the never to be forgotten or disregarded achievements) but the longer term history of each country.

For example, Russia was a feudal peasant country until almost the end of the last century. Germany was saturated with Nazi ideology from 1933 to its defeat in 1945. Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Baltic Republics all had fascist governments before or during World War II. They were not only steeped in anti-communist hysteria but in an anti-Russian phobia as well.

The real miracle is that socialism was able, in a short period of time, to achieve so much. Many will come to appreciate that truth more if they should lose their socialist gains.

But it is wrong to simply blame the past, either the pre- or post-revolutionary period. History explains many things but it cannot be blamed.

Today's leaders and the present generations must take into account the good and bad of history but have to take responsibility and ensure that problems are overcome in a way which will build and strengthen and not destroy.

Some things are already clear.

#### **Action and consequence**

A number of policies have been adopted and actions taken, the consequences of which have not been properly estimated and, at least in the short-term, did not produce the intended results.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany was publicly chided for being slow in joining the perestroika movement and this, added to the undoubted existence of serious problems, opened wide the floodgates of change.

But the changes ran out of control and could lead to the reunification of Germany under unfavourable circumstances and have seriously weakened the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.

German revanchism and Nazism have re-emerged in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the economic and political absorption of the GDR into the Federal Republic of Germany has become possible. This could spell the destruction of socialism in the GDR.

Were these consequences foreseen? Probably not. No-one in their right mind can claim that this is a good thing for Germany, for Europe or the USSR. Need this have happened? No: Among the many causes must be included ill-considered words and unheralded substantial policy changes which contributed to a state of affairs which paralysed the party at a most critical moment.

There is a lesson here. Any far-reaching changes need to be carefully considered. No-one should act hastily.

## **Ideology**

In many of the communist and workers' parties political educational work was either neglected or was carried on in a most formalistic and unconvincing manner. Presentation of news and information remained at a primitive level which tended to give the running in this field to the capitalist mass media.

What has been revealed in the crucible of dramatic events is an ideological mire -- pragmatism and opportunism in politics and a veritable grab-bag of confusion in ideology.

Gus Hall, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USA, put it this way in a recent speech, "The negative features in the socialist world cannot be explained without taking into account some long term weaknesses including the vacuum created by a lack of ideological struggle which in turn leads to weaknesses in political leadership".

## **Democracy "in general"**

Democratisation was proceeded with without any clear definition of socialist democracy. It was what Lenin called "democracy in general".

In 1919 Lenin chided the petty-bourgeoisie and the social democrats about the "unutterably nonsensical and theoretically stupid idea ... that the transition to socialism is possible 'by means of democracy' in general.

"The fundamental source of this error lies in the prejudice inherited from the bourgeoisie that 'democracy' is something absolute and above classes...

"From the point of view of the proletariat, the question can be put only in the following way: freedom from oppression by which class? equality of which class with what? democracy based on private property or on a struggle for the abolition of private property?" ([Lenin's Collected Works], Vol 30, p 116/7)

There is now much talk about a multi-party system without reference to how it will serve socialism. This means adopting the idea that it is possible to have "democracy in general".

## **Nationalism**

The treatment of the various nationalist movements also shows that ideology is missing. The Lithuanian party majority, instead of countering rising nationalism with a firm internationalist, class stand, with appeals to the common class interests of all workers of Lithuania, tried to ingratiate themselves by joining the nationalist movement.

This piece of political opportunism did not pay off and contributed to the position which has now arisen.

To quote Gus Hall again, "In the midst of the nationalist fervour, with entrenched elements of anti-Sovietism and anti-socialism, what is missing is an argument on sound ideological grounds. What is missing is an argument based on the benefits of preserving and advancing socialism in Lithuania. What is missing is a rejection of capitalism."

The treatment of this question by reference to economic issues and by setting a commercial price on secession is a bankrupt approach which is bound to fail.

Will those who put a commercial price on Lithuanian secession (and Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, etc.) also quote a price for selling the Sakhalin Islands to the Japanese?

Soviet spokesperson, Gennadi Gerasimov, likened the Lithuanian issue to a divorce. After divorce comes a property settlement, he said. His analogy is wrong. Lithuanian secession is like cutting off one's own arm and that is not the same as divorce.

This approach shows an absence of ideological understanding and far from contribution to a solution, actually intensifies the problem.

Relations between nations and between nationalities within a nation can only be properly worked out on the basis of internationalism. Anything less than this will inevitably degenerate into nationalism, chauvinism, even racism. And this is what has happened with more than a few communists joining in the nationalist hysteria.

## **Disarmed**

The abandonment of ideology has also been signalled by the propagation of the concept of "de-ideologisation". This idea is as nonsensical as "democracy in general" and has the same consequence. It disarms the communists just at the moment when the ideological struggle has reached a new peak of importance.

As mentioned in a previous article the imperialists are not so foolish as to abandon their ideological positions.

Of all the factors which have contributed to the present situation, and there are many, the weakness or even abandonment of ideological positions is probably the main one.

## **Indecision**

This state of affairs prompted the recent statement by KGB officers who, in a three-page letter, said that, "they are perplexed because the leading organs of the country, while possessing the data that anticipated developing negative phenomena, clearly lagged with vitally important political decisions and are still too slow and indecisive.

“Gambling on glasnost and the pluralism of opinions, loud-mouthed advocates of social interests denigrate the sacred name of Lenin and the notions of Motherland, patriotism and October that are so dear to every Soviet person.”

These statements are clear and direct. The KGB officers go on to say that, “Soviet KGB forces act and will act firmly, consistently and reliably in the interests of the people. They will protect the security of the socialist system, the rights and freedom of each person and our socialist democracy”.

## **Much depends on the workers**

A marked feature of the period has been the widespread failure of the parties to be able to bring the workers into action to defend socialism. The parties must bear the responsibility for this.

In many ways the party apparatus replaced the working class in its role as the leading social force in society. Many were immobilised and alienated.

Now, new leaderships will arise as the working class gets over its paralysis and moves into action in the socialist countries to save public property from privatisation, their working conditions, security and social welfare programs which exceed by far social welfare in most of the capitalist countries.

In a renewed socialism, the working class must ensure that it participates fully and carries out its responsibility to provide the political leadership for the whole nation. By merging themselves with the working class and not standing above or outside it, the communists will once again win the confidence of the working people.

A story from Poland is a good note on which to conclude. Lech Walesa and others made a big noise about how the Johnson & Johnson heiress to the US pharmaceutical fortune was going to buy out the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. Her picture was posted on the front gate and she was given a guarantee of a five-year ban on strikes, a 50c per hour reduction in wages and the sacking of 3,500 workers.

But when the offer was put to the shipyard workers they turned it down flat. The lady's picture was removed from the gate. The Solidarity union is seen more and more as part of the establishment that is imposing hardship and austerity and is losing its influence among the workers.

## **The Guardian, No. 525, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1990**

### **Perestroika -- A Balance Sheet (part VII)**

This series was written in an attempt to evaluate some of the developments which have taken place in the East European socialist countries and in the Soviet Union and to discuss important economic, social, political and ideological problems which have been thrown up by these events.

The fact that in this series of articles we have concentrated on issues which have been largely raised overseas, does not mean we should, and must not push us, to become transfixed by current events in Eastern Europe.

There is not much that anyone in Australia can do about these events, but we can use them to clarify our own ideas on issues which have just as much relevance to Australia as to any overseas country. We CAN do something about the situation in our own country.

Although capitalism is crowing about its victory, its own crisis and instability continues. It CANNOT solve the problems of the working people. Exploitation of labour, resources and the environment continue. Its fundamental nature has not changed. Many struggles are taking place.

In a recent resolution, the SPA Central Committee, said that the main task of SPA members, together with others, is to take part in the struggles of the working people of Australia.

## **Our responsibility is here**

“It is our responsibility”, said the resolution “to work out the Australian way forward. No-one else can do that for us. While overseas experience has to be taken into account, the Australian reality is our starting point. It is on the basis of this reality that the party has to apply its Marxist analysis and chart the way ahead.

“The party must be able to stand on its own feet and account to the Australian people for its policies and activities.”

The party resolution was critical of the fact that quite a few members are relatively isolated from the mainstream of public life. As a result, the party is not able to “influence the outcome of events or win support for its policies” in the way that it should.

The statement was also critical of leadership “in general”. It had to be specific in the ever-changing day to day life of people.

The working people face the capitalist reality here -- hospital closures, privatisation of education and other publicly owned services, the environment, living standards and democratic rights, the maintenance of peace and the need to get rid of the American bases.

We need to do something about solidarity with Cuba which is seriously threatened by the US. High interest rates and foreign take-overs are all on the agenda. There are many issues and plenty for everyone to do. So, let's get into it.

At the same time we must have an objective and know how to get there.

## **Ideology more important than ever**

More than at any previous time, questions of ideology have assumed enormous importance. No ship can reach its destination without a compass, neither can a political party. Our compass is Marxism.

It is apparent from events overseas that there are many serious ideological shortcomings. Some parties virtually stopped ideological education among their members and among the

people. No new Lenin has arisen to bring sharp clarity and to incisively criticise distortions and departures from Marxism as Lenin did in his lifetime.

Lenin studied the ideas of many other philosophers, economists and political writers. He needed to know intimately the views of others, but he did not study others to create an ideological Irish stew. He passionately argued for Marxism.

Marxism by its very nature is not dogmatic, but it is not a ragbag collection either. Some, in the present situation, have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to question and challenge everything. Let us do that by all means and keep our minds open, but this does not mean that we have to re-invent the wheel everyday.

Marxism is a truly scientific and liberating ideology and should not be misused and abused in its application. Unfortunately, the propagation and practice of Marxism is often carried out in a formalistic way which, in effect, is not Marxist at all.

In combating these shortcomings there is another danger. It is that the baby be thrown out with the bathwater. Instead of blaming distortions of Marxism, Marxism itself is blamed.

Many of the attacks on Marxism come from within, that is, in the name of Marx. This method of assault is widespread today. Lenin dealt with such attempts when he argued with Bernstein, Kautsky, Plekhanov, Trotsky, Martov and many others.

## **Revisionism particularly dangerous**

In their attempts to revise Marxism, its opponents attempt to interpret Marxism in such a way as to remove its revolutionary essence. The objective is to water it down and pull its teeth.

The attacks from within Marxism are particularly dangerous as they are much more likely to mislead and confuse those who are for social change but have assimilated only bits and pieces and have an inconsistent application of Marxism.

In today's bitter contests any unprincipled concessions on the part of Marxists can be fatal. This is being proven once again by developments in Eastern Europe.

Revisionists who open the door to bourgeois ideas and practices, no matter how well-intentioned, will quickly find themselves overwhelmed and hijacked by the representatives of reaction and imperialism.

Fidel Castro put it this way in a recent speech. "Some people tried to save socialism by making concessions. How little they know the voracious, monstrous mentality of imperialism and reaction. If you give them the nail on your little finger, they want the whole finger; if you give them your finger, they ask for your hand; if you give them your hand, they ask for your arm; and when you give them your whole arm, they take off your head. "What way of defending socialism is that, when you start by losing an arm and a leg? Losing your arms, your strength and other things -- your heart and your spirit. This is why the Cuban Revolution won't back up even an inch." ([Granma February 11, 1990)

This is not to confuse the necessity for ideological firmness with the task of, say, getting rid of bureaucracy and getting the economy moving. These will be achieved all the sooner by a principled application and propagation of Marxism.

Much more has yet to be argued and understood about recent events. But it is clear that the most important issue for all parties today is ideological backwardness. It is ideological shortcomings both past and present which have led to the unnecessary setbacks and losses in the socialist countries. If the rot is not soon stopped socialism will continue to fall on hard times.

Nor is it a time for wishful thinking. It is necessary to face up squarely to reality and to act to change the situation for the better, pushing the direction of change towards the positive rather than the negative. It is not a time for drop-outs.

It is the present leaderships which have the responsibility NOW, irrespective of the failings of past leaders. At present the course being followed has not led to a consolidation of socialism or improved the authority of parties. All that has recently happened cannot be blamed on those who have long since departed the scene.

## **Socialism must be strengthened**

The central question is whether or not a particular theory or course of action strengthens socialism or weakens it. Democratization should strengthen SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY.

A diversification of forms of ownership of property should strengthen the SOCIALIST ECONOMY.

The existence and functioning of a parliament should pass laws which develop and strengthen the SOCIALIST STATE.

All too often policies which are currently being implemented do not make this clear. There is "democracy in general" and market forces economics without any qualification.

The first Program of the Communist International adopted in the 1920s said on this question: "The outwardly capitalist forms and methods of economic activity that are bound up with market relations serve as levers for the socialist transformation, insofar as they, to an increasing degree serve the consistently socialist type of enterprises, that is, the socialist section of economy.

"Thus, provided the State carries out a correct policy, market relations under the proletarian dictatorship destroy themselves in the process of their own development."

The first fruits of the new course of bourgeois democracy and market economics are already being seen in Eastern European countries -- mass unemployment, soup kitchens, impoverishment, skyrocketing prices, increasing crime and the persecution of workers and communists. Communists are being thrown out of jobs. Such is the new democracy.

At the same time there are many positive and correct applications of Marxism by communist parties which have understood the class nature of society, adhere to internationalism, are developing socialist democracy, understand imperialism and continue the struggle against it.

We can learn from their achievements as well as the setbacks. All theories are eventually tested out by their results.

Socialism remains the inevitable future for humankind and the way to achieve it is through the understanding and application of Marxism.

**END**