The Communist Manifesto was written one hundred years ago this month. It was published a few months later, in 1848. It was the first manifesto of scientific socialism, that is, its first programmatic statement, and yet, its most important sections appear to have been written yesterday. After one hundred years, it still provides important directives in the struggle for human emancipation.

Its young authors, Marx was 29 and Engels 27 at the time of its writing, had separately but simultaneously worked out their ideas, each drawing from a different tradition but both reaching the same conclusions. The ideas of Marx, stemming from the French Revolution and the Rights of Man, and those of Engels from the development of English industry—the French Revolution and English industrial growth, the two great historic transformations from which the history of modern bourgeois society dates. Beginning with the best products of the bourgeois revolution, Marx and Engels were able to go far beyond it and far beyond anyone of their time or since. In paying tribute to the Manifesto we must not forget, in passing, to admire the genius of its authors.

The Manifesto includes in succinct programmatic form all of the basic ideas of socialism. If one merely takes time to give flesh and blood to its skeletal form, to expand on each of its compact ideas, the result will be— with a few corrections—a textbook of all that is important in Marxism. Corrections are important in the few secondary, though important, passages of the Manifesto which have become antiquated. Marx and Engels, in their joint preface of 1872, were able to point to some of these. They felt, however, that they no longer had the right to alter the original form of text of the document since it had already become a historical work. That was 25 years after its publication; today, after 75 more years have passed, passages of the Manifesto have receded still further into the background. It is important to understand which of its ideas still retain their original validity and which have lost their force and consequently require amplification or alteration.

THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The materialist conception of history which is used with such skill in the Manifesto has completely withstood the test of events. Despite the abundance of hostile criticism directed against it, it remains the only scientific interpretation of history. It is directly responsible for the accuracy of prediction, the true test of a science, which we can find in the record of applied Marxism over the past hundred years.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." So begins the Communist Manifesto. This concept of class struggle remains the most important conclusion drawn from the materialist interpretation of history and the first consideration necessary to any analysis of any problem. This postulate, based on existing conditions and not invented by the authors, has become both an issue and a factor in the class struggle. As an issue, the existence of the class struggle has been denied by the ruling class. As a fact-

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or, the recognition of class struggle by the working class puts the existing struggle on a new and higher level and makes its prosecution intelligent and controlled. Marx and Engels proved that "common welfare," "national unity," "eternal moral truths" are meaningless phrases. He empirically established the struggle for material interests as driving forces of history. The reactionaries and liberal democrats were joined in their attacks on this theory, by the labor fakers and later by the Stalinists, who by class conciliation, "Popular Frontism," and support of warring imperialist countries sought to revise this basis principle of Marxism. But today, at the height of the epoch of imperialism and wars, which brings all social contradictions to the point of greatest tension, the Communist Manifesto has its supreme theoretical triumph.

The anatomy of capitalism as a specific stage in the economic development of society was given by Marx in its finished form in Capital (1867). But already in the Manifesto the main lines of the future analysis were sketched: the payment for labor as equivalent to its cost of reproduction, the appropriation of surplus value by the capitalists, competition as the basic law of all social relations; the ruination of all intermediate classes; the concentration of wealth in the hands of an ever diminishing number of property owners at the one pole, and the numerical growth of the proletariat, at the other; the preparation of the material and political preconditions for the socialist revolution.

CAPITALISM LOWERS LIVING STANDARDS

The proposition in the Manifesto concerning the tendency of world capitalism to lower the living standards of the workers was at one time subjected to a barrage of criticism. It is no longer even necessary to show the false basis of these attacks; the depression of 1929 and the subsequent war have proven the point, not only beyond all doubt, but beyond all apology. The only basis on which American capitalism has been able to achieve even a semblance of stability is in its role as imperialist exploiter of foreign continents.

The Communist Manifesto predicts and describes the commercial and industrial disorders of capitalism. The revisionists, during a period when capitalism was still experiencing rapid growth and development, stated that the rising trusts and cartels would bring an end to capitalist crises by assuring a controlled market. Here too, history has reinforced Marxian theory in answering its critics.

THEORY OF THE STATE

"The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." With this succinct formula the manifesto scientifically appraises the modern state. History nods its head. The "freedom" granted under any of the so-called democratic states, is freedom for bourgeois rule. The different methods of bourgeois rule arise out of different needs of the ruling class at different stages of development of the economy and the class struggle.

#Marx later differentiated between labor and labor power.
"Every class struggle is a political struggle", says the Manifesto. Later it adds, "The organization of the proletariat as a class is consequently its organization into a political party." "Pure trade unionism" has long tried to ignore these historical laws. In the United States where purely economic unionism has been the traditional philosophy of the working class, the trade unions are now being forced into politics. The turn of economic events, the increasingly evident inability of capitalist industry to solve its own problems, and the mounting intervention of the government in the economic problems of the country, are forcing the unions into politics. But for the unions to enter politics by merely participating in the already existing bourgeois political arena is not enough. To accomplish anything, even only to defend their existing standards, the unions will have to give up their policy of supporting candidates of the capitalist parties. What is in order is "the organization of the proletariat as a class---its organization into a political party." We might add, if only for emphasis --- its organization into an independent party--- an independent labor party. Already many union militants are coming to see this as a necessary next step for American labor.

The proletariat cannot conquer power within the legal framework established by the bourgeoisie. "Communists openly declare their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." Reformism sought to explain the postulate of the Manifesto on the grounds that the movement in Marx's time was immature and that democracy had not yet developed adequately. The fate of the Italian, German, and Spanish "democracies", to mention a few, is adequate testimony to the bankruptcy of reformism.

SOCIALISM IS INTERNATIONAL

Marxism has always taught that the international development of capitalism predetermines the international character of the proletariat revolution. On this point the Manifesto says, "United action of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat." While any examination of would capitalism today will prove positively that this is even more true today than in 1848, the Stalinists have proved it negatively by their futile attempt to build "socialism in a single country", a backward country at that. What has emerged from that attempt is of course not socialism but its opposite: a bureaucratic society of poverty and slavery.

Compare, also, the section of the Communist Manifesto which predicts the withering away of the state under socialism with all that we know about the direction of Russian development under the Stalinists. Far from withering away, the state has grown into a monstrous oppressive instrument. The Stalinists have tried to explain this fact in many ways but the Manifesto is unequivocal. "When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character."

Despite the fact that two world wars have killed millions and almost destroyed western civilization and that a third world war, which might easily finish the job, appears on the horizon, most people still look upon the "The workingmen have no fatherland" slogan of the Menife-
The Basic Validity of Manifesto Today

These are the things in which the Manifesto continues to give us irreplaceable directives. They are the burning problems of the struggle for emancipation. It is a brief work, but what other can be compared in this respect with it? This does not imply, however, that after one hundred years the Communist Manifesto needs no corrections. The Manifesto requires corrections, and additions, but these can be made adequately only if done in accordance with the method laid down in the original work itself.

Marx and Engels taught that no social system departs from the arena of history before exhausting its creative possibilities. The Manifesto condemns capitalism for retarding the development of the productive forces. During that period, however, as well as the next few decades, capitalism only hindered the growth of the productive forces in a relative sense. Had a socialist society been organized at that time, it would have been possible to increase the tempo of growth of the productive forces many times over. But this is not to say that they were not increasing undercapitalism. It was only much later that the productive forces under capitalism began an actual decline and capitalism was transformed from a relatively reactionary social system to an absolutely reactionary one. The last war already wiped out a goodly portion of the accumulated capital of mankind, and the next war, if allowed to occur, threatens to destroy even the possibility of maintaining any kind of civilized existence. Marx and Engels believed that capitalism would be overthrown before its decline had reached this stage. The transformation, having already taken place, and forcing us to make this amendment only serves to emphasize the need for fundamental change that the authors of the Manifesto taught.

Theory of Progress

In this connection it is necessary to reevaluate the theory of progress developed by Marx and Engels and implicit in the Manifesto. Realizing that the basis for the complete emancipation of man was the development of technology to the point where a society of plenty for all was possible, they saw as progressive anything which satisfied this prerequisite; i.e., anything which raised the level of the productive forces. But now that this condition for socialism has been attained, by and large, by the tremendous development of modern productive forces on a world scale, we must go beyond it to another essential prerequisite for the socialist revolution: the consciousness of the working class and the prosecution of the class struggle to its logical conclusion. The level of the productive forces is no longer a criterion, in order to judge whether something is progressive, we must first determine its effect on the class struggle. In the last war Trotsky's defense of Russia was based upon the fact that Russian nationalized economy was able to expand the productive
forces while capitalism could not. That is what he meant when he said that Russia, though a degenerated and oppressive system, was progressive nevertheless. He was wrong because he did not take into account sufficiently the effect of Stalinism on the consciousness of the working class and consequently its effect on the possibility for successful revolution.

Although the Manifesto's prediction of proletarian revolution remains valid, it errs in the historical dates which Marx and Engels thought would mark the beginning of the revolutionary period. This error flowed from an underestimation of the future possibilities latent in capitalism and an overestimation of the revolutionary maturity of the proletariat. The revolution of 1848 in Germany opened up the possibility of a vast future capitalist ascension instead of becoming the first stage of the socialist revolution. The Paris Commune of 1871 showed that without a conscious revolutionary party the proletariat cannot wrest and hold power. Since then, the prolonged period of capitalist development and prosperity brought about not the education of the revolutionary vanguard, but rather the bourgeois degeneration of the labor aristocracy which became in turn an important brake upon the proletarian revolution. Later, by preventing the revolution in Western Europe, this aristocracy was largely responsible for the isolation of the Russian revolution and facilitated the rise of Stalinism. Each of these results assumed a motion of its own and became a cause of the further postponement of the revolution. However, the authors of the Manifesto could not have possibly foreseen these developments.

The Manifesto saw capitalism as the kingdom of free enterprise. It did not draw the necessary conclusions about the growth of monopoly. This was later done in Marx's "Capital." Even more recently Lenin in his "Imperialism" brings the analysis of this aspect of the development of capitalism up-to-date.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

Marx and Engels predicted the wholesale liquidation of the middle classes. They pictured this process as a proletarianization of craftsmen, petty tradesman and peasants. But as a matter of fact, capitalism has ruined the middle classes at a much faster rate than it has proletarianized them. The growth of technology at one and the same time crushes the middle class and engenders chronic unemployment among the proletariat. This chronic unemployment and the declassing of whole sections of the population, both middle class and workers, is one of the most brutal aspects of capitalist decline. On the other hand, the growth of technology has created the so-called "new middle class" of technicians, administrators, and commercial employees. We must recognize this however as an artificial preservation of petty bourgeois strata.

THE MANIFESTO AND PERMANENT REVOLUTION

The Manifesto erred in foreseeing a successful bourgeois revolution in Germany which it spoke of as but "a prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution." The revolution of 1848 revealed that under the more advanced conditions of countries which came late on the bourgeois scene none of the bourgeois classes are capable of
bringing the revolution to its termination. The bourgeoisie is too tied to the land-owning class and fears the masses; the petty-bourgeoisie is too divided and in its top layers too closely dependent upon the large capitalists. As evidenced by the more recent history of such countries as Russia, China, India and Spain, as well as Germany in 1848, under such conditions society can only be purged of its feudal remnants if the proletariat freed from the influence of the bourgeoisie can assume hegemony over the peasantry and establish its own dictatorship. This supplementation of Marxism was made by Trotsky and his theory of the "permanent revolution."

Although the manifesto describes the process whereby capitalism draws into its arena the backward and uncivilized countries of the world, it contains no reference to colonial and national struggles. This is so because its authors, in expecting the socialist revolution in Western Europe to take place in the immediate future, also foresaw by virtue of this, the automatic solution of the problem of national liberation and self-determination.

The Communist Manifesto includes ten demands for use in the period of the direct transition from capitalism to socialism. In the 1872 preface to the manifesto, Marx and Engels called these demands antiquated in part. The necessary correction is that the "proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes." After the Paris Commune, Marx saw the Commune as the type of state needed by the proletariat. With the Russian revolution this type of state took an even more definite form as "Soviets." Given this correction, the demands put forth in the Manifesto are completely applicable today. In our own program we speak of workers' control; without these demands there can be no revolutionary program.

The Communist Manifesto has been more than a theoretical guide in our struggle. It has been, and remains today, a living force in history. In its own time it served as a call to arms; it was an organizer in the formative period of the proletarian movement. Throughout the whole history of that movement it served as a teacher. It is in that capacity that we find it most useful today.

Justin Graham

The latter part of the above article is of a discussion nature and should not be viewed as an official SYL position. We feel that several points in the article are not well taken. Particularly the paragraphs dealing with Marx's theory of progress. In our opinion Comrade Graham does not correctly estimate the importance which Marx and Engels did attach to the role of consciousness in history and more specifically to the role of political consciousness among the working class as a prerequisite for a successful socialist revolution. Also, Graham states in his article "the effect (of modern capitalism) upon the level of the productive forces no longer is the main criterion." This we feel is incorrect.

The point is that modern capitalism cannot raise the level of production on a world scale without producing wars and ever deepening crises. It is precisely because we are concerned with the level of production that we can no longer look upon capitalism as being even a relatively progressive economic system. Only a socialist economy today can attain sound stability and give a tremendous impetus to the growth of the productive forces.

Our readers are invited to present their own ideas on this question to the Socialist Youth Review. --The Editors
The Great Drought of Italian fascism lasted for twenty-two years. That after nearly a quarter of a century the barren tree of Italian culture again broke into leaf, is of more than passing interest. One of the most striking aspects of this renaissance has been the appearance of several noteworthy Italian films.

These films, of which "Open City", "Shoeshine", and "To Live In Peace", are the best examples, derive from the national liberation movement. They bear a relation to it similar to the relation of the Russian film masterpieces of the early 'twenties to the revolution of 1917. In the recent Italian films are mirrored all the strength of the resistance movement, and all its weakness. They are art products of an epoch of historical decline, moving, sometimes brilliant but of necessity limited by the nature of the forces producing them.

What is immediately striking about these films is their realism. The shooting has been done, for the most part, not on sound stages, as is done in Hollywood, but from life itself. Authenticity is almost immediately established. In one moment we have been transported to the campagna, to an ancient hill town, to a bombed-out city. People are equally real. The range of human types is greater. In the three pictures named they include a range not found in the US pictures. Further, the people involved are more real; women are not the uniformly enameled, effete dolls of Hollywood. They are taken from life. Working-class women are portrayed as they live—pregnant, without makeup, generous, petty, ragged, whatever their conditions may be.

The plot is more real—that is, it has been taken from life, it draws in more normal types—not the criminal caste who furnishes much of significant living for US movies, the moral problems posed are higher and the stakes are greater—they are usually life or death itself.

The moral problem of "To Live In Peace" is posed by the dangers involved in harboring two American soldiers during the German occupation. This is much the same theme of the Swiss film, "The Last Chance". This basic situation (somewhat humorously treated in, "To Live In Peace") creates an atmosphere in these films which is much more significant in analysing these movies and explaining the psychology of our times than the involutions of the plot itself.

In all three of these movies there is a sense of flight. In "To Live In Peace" and in "Open City" it is from the Germans. In "Shoeshine" it is from the reform school, that microcosm of the totalitarian society sealed down for juveniles. This fact of flight is similarly dominant in the previously mentioned Swiss film, "The Last Chance", and in the sensitive Swiss study of a child, "Marie Louise". This flight assumed not only an objective character (there is real flight) but takes on the character of an internal compulsion, an inner malaise.

Linked to this, but somewhat different, is a continuous anxiety
which gnaws at almost all persons in these movies—anxiety over discovery, anxiety over death, anxiety over a lover, anxiety over an air-raid—anxiety in a thousand and one forms. Undifferentiated anxiety.

There is likewise a pervasive pessimism. In "Shoeshine" it is epitomized by the inevitable tragedy of the end, from which there is no way out. In "To Live In Peace" it is contained in a sentence by the peasant father who already feels the coming of another war.

Pervading most of these Italian films is also a feeling of hopelessness of human effort. The rewards of acts of courage and self-sacrifice are either non-existent or disproportionately small. Or else the bad win, the hunter and the hunted both perish, or persons—especially children—innocent in everything except that they are members of the human race are brought down to destruction.

Another characteristic of these Italian films is a religious tone, gained not by an expression of religious feeling but by the physical presence of priests. The form, not the content.

These emotional states well convey the climate of the resistance movement and of the post-resistance society. Viewed as a whole these films reflect the limitations of the resistance movement and its contradictions. In that sense the dead-end of the post-war society revealed in "Shoeshine" is a logical sequel to the heroic epoch of the resistance portrayed in "Open City". "Shoeshine" is the tragedy of the black market, which sums up the economic impasse of post-war capitalism. The parallel social decay is symbolized by the death of a child, normally the most protected individual in society, as a result of having become caught up in black market operations.

The characteristics of these films can be most clearly seen when they are compared with the early Russian revolutionary films. The dynamism of the latter, though twenty-five years have elapsed, is striking. This is not to accuse the Italian films of lacking revolutionary finale. They articulate the times, and they bear their own emotional charge. That is not the least demand of a modern film. The comparison is made to explain what these films show of our epoch.

Why has Italy been able to produce several pictures capturing in all its fullness the tumult of our times? First, these films are able to draw upon experiences and emotional depths which are not available in the United States because a war was not fought on its own soil. Apparently available in Italy, also, was a Stalinist or Stalinized intelligentsia ready with a program for filling in the cultural vacuum which followed the vanishing of fascism. Their restricted "leftism" accounts for a great deal of what is good in the films—and more of what is bad. Why France with a genuinely significant movie tradition, has produced no films of a character comparable to the Italian ones during the post-war period is worth speculating upon. One factor can well be the presence of a large non-Stalinist intelligentsia resident from before the war. The Stalinists were not able to gain the field by default, as, it seems probable has happened in Italy.
That Switzerland could produce some exceptional movies can be ascribed, among other things, to an objectivity possible because of her almost unique position in Europe, which permits her to remain uncommitted amid the imperialist struggles. Another factor in the success of Italian films is her technical poverty, which forces the use of real locales and perhaps influences her employment of so many non-professional actors.

There is one country in Europe where the greatest films of the times lie waiting to be called to life: that country is Germany. In the three brief years alone between El Alamein and the last rubble heap in Berlin, Germany endured an epic catastrophe whose grandeur and whose pity possess all the elements of the deepest tragedy. Whether that tragedy will ever be committed to film depends upon the evolution of political events in the next few years.

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NO PEACE FOR ASIA

If the present post-war period is suffering from a shortage of anticipated "disillusionment" novels, such as engulfed the country after the first war, it most certainly is not suffering a similar shortage as regards diaries, private journals, official reminiscences and unofficial ramblings of every journalist who happened to board a ship or plan bound for some corner of the world. The great bulk of these books disappear on the 15¢ counters of second-hand bookstores to a most well deserved fate of oblivion. There are a mere handful that do not merit such a fate, and one of them is Harold R. Isaacs' record of post-war Asia, most adequately entitled, "NO PEACE FOR ASIA". The name of Isaacs should not sound strange to those familiar with Marxist literature. Besides being the co-translator of Trotsky's "Whith or France", among other things he is the author of what is perhaps the best book to date on the Chinese Revolution: THE TRAGEDY OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION. Trotsky thought sufficiently of this book to write the introduction. No neophyte journalist, Isaacs has been a newspaperman for 18 years, seven of which he spent in the Far East. What is more, he has been a genuine student of nationalist and Marxist movements, and he is able to combine a wealth of experience with theoretical clarity. His latest book is written in a more popular vein than the previous one, and it is to be hoped that the larger audience at whom he is evidently aiming will materialize. But that does not mean that his ideas are diluted; except in one possible instance, to which I shall refer later, is there any doubt as to the genuine insight into the complex problems of peace in Asia or for that matter in the entire world.

The story of the Far East is the tragic unfolding of an uninterrupted series of double dealings, broken pledges, bloody suppressions, and shattered aspirations - almost always culminating in mass murders. Every major country is involved, and nowhere else is better demonstrated the monstrous hypocrisy with which the imperialist powers attempt to mask the yawning gap that separates official declaration from actual policy. The peoples of the Far East soon learned the real meaning of the Atlantic Charter and "Four Freedoms". Where the inhabitants had fought the Japanese vigorously in the hope of realizing their own nationalist dreams, they were the more bitterly disillusioned by the incontrovertible fact that the United States was not particularly interested in them for other than imperialist reasons. The defeat of "reaction" and "fascism" in Asia was followed by: 1) The brutal crushing of the national independence movements in Indoneisa and Indochina, by British, Dutch and French troops using American matériel; 2) the handing over of Manchuria and the Kuriles to Russia; 3) the imprisonment of anti-Japanese peasant leaders in the Phillipines; and 4) the division of Korea between the United States and Russia over the protests of the Korean people. Can anyone doubt why Isaacs found that the dominant post-war emotion in Asia was a deep and bitter disillusionment?

The most detailed and stimulating sections of the book deal with the struggles for independence in Indonesia and Indochina. News of this phase of recent history has only trickled back to
the Western countries thanks to the cooperation of the imperialist powers on matters of censorship. Consequently, much of the material that appears in this part of the book is new. It was only with the start of full scale warfare that the press releases began coming through; actually the Southeast Asia peoples have been struggling for their freedom for decades, even centuries. When the Indonesians, attempting to arouse sympathy in the breasts of their fellow humans who were so casually slaughtering them, scrawled over the walls of the occupied cities: "We are fighting for the inalienable right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" — they were given the answer of tanks, airplanes, heavy artillery, all stamped USA. When their shocked protest reached the citadel of democracy in Washington, they were given another answer: the State Department requested the British troops (who were then responsible for the maintenance of "law and order" under the terms of the Potsdam Agreement) to remove all the USA insignia from the weapons. So with a bottle of OD paint, the U.S. government solidarized itself with the Indonesians' struggle, recalling no doubt, the Spirit of '76 to the minds of many democrats.

Some valuable statistics are furnished, if further proof were still necessary at this late date, of the beneficial results of imperialism for the people who are "de-burdened". 93% of the Indonesian population is illiterate; 97% receive 30% of the national income. Indochina under the "protection" of democratic France has 3 times as many prisons and concentration camps as hospitals. The salary of a qualified Indonesian engineer is 3 times less than that of a white janitor of the University of Hanoi. Long before Lidice, the French troops utilized the method of wiping out an entire town as a measure of reprisal. These and similar facts lay the groundwork for the tremendous and universal support among the masses of the nationalist movement. The Japanese occupation gave a huge impetus to the development of these independence movements. In Indochina, French administration officials collaborated with the occupying Japanese; the Viet Nam independence movement went into the interior and from there conducted raids for arms and built up a rather effective military force which was to come in handy later. The role of young people — the youth — in these nationalist movements is a powerful one. One of the most moving descriptions in the book is that of a meeting of young Indonesians full of enthusiasm and ardor, fighting against almost insurmountable odds, yet burning with courage of their convictions, and sure of eventual victory. Perhaps a small portion of this feeling can be conveyed by the following excerpt:

They packed the ornate empire-style theater in Hanoi to listen to the reports by young partisans newly arrived from the South. They crowded the stalls, young taut men and women, an unlikely audience in this setting built by Frenchmen for Frenchmen. The young man from the south spoke alone on a platform against a simple backdrop of a huge Viet Nam flag. He told of clashes and exploits around Saigon making his words glow with that fine inspiration that comes only when men see things by their own inner light. On the enemy he poured scorn. "We are inferior to the French in the matter of arms," he said. He paused a long instant and then added, "Also in the matter of cowardice!" The youthful audience reared. "Blood will flow across our country," he soberly

(continued on page 32)
The earliest form of production is that carried on for the immediate personal consumption of the producer himself. Such production is typical of small self-sufficient communities in which the division of labor between the various trades (such as hunting, fishing, agriculture, weaving etc.) is accomplished either according to custom or through deliberation. To this category belongs the society of the North American Indian at the time of Columbus, for example.

A far higher form of production is that carried on for the purpose of selling the result of the process on an organized market, in other words what Marxists call commodity production. Such production is typical of communities which have transcended their local limits, in regard to production and achieved a national or even international division of labor. The highest form of commodity producing society is capitalism and especially the so-called free or democratic capitalism of the United States.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRIMITIVE AND CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

The primitive Indian community had to divide up the productive tasks it undertook in satisfying its needs among a few hundred persons at the most. Because the community was so small and because its organisational problems were so simple and unchanging, this division could be accomplished either by custom or by the conscious plan of the community. In a modern society, such as that of the United States, however, the division of labor (between steel producers, coal miners, auto producers, farmers, etc.) must be achieved between millions of men living hundreds of miles apart. The mechanism for achieving it in the right proportions, is neither custom nor plan, but rather the laws of market competition or what Marxists call the law of value. For instance, if too many producers enter the shoe industry and too few enter the coat industry, .... too many shoes, too few coats. .... the price of shoes falls, the price of coats rises, some producers are forced to transfer from the shoe industry to the coat industry until prices are righted and the correct proportions are achieved.

In the one case, in primitive society, man's productive relations are determined by his consciousness. In the other, in commodity production what men shall do in production is determined by social laws and forces beyond their control and usually beyond their understanding.

The purpose of this social force, the law of value, is to plan and direct the productive activities of men in a society which has grown so complex that men do not do this themselves. Without this direction, production would have been impossible during the last hundred and fifty years of modern capitalism.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CAPITALIST COMMODITY PRODUCTION

The highest form of commodity production is modern capitalism. The immediate distinguishing marks of this form of
commodity production are first that a separate and distinct class of wage laborers arises who have no productive property and consequently are forced to sell their labor power to work for a wage in order to live, and secondly that production is carried on no longer merely for the purpose of sale but for the purpose of sale at a profit.

The cellular unit of capitalist production is the individual factory or work-shop. Within the factory, capitalism is characterized by the strictest dictatorship of the capitalist over the laboring producers. He (or his hirelings: engineers, supervisors, foremen, etc.) has complete control over the labor he has hired, directing it in this or that activity as he sees fit and completely excluding the laborers from the intellectual or mental processes of production. Any attempt of the laborers to participate in the management of the factory, i.e., in the direction of their labor, the capitalist attacks as an interference with the rights of private property, as it certainly is.

Thus capitalism brings about not only a division between different types of labor (shoe-making, cotton planting, mining etc.) but also between the mental and manual aspects of production itself.

THE SEPARATION OF MANUAL AND MENTAL LABOUR

"The separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labour, and the conversion of those powers into the might of capital over labour, is, as we have already shown, finally completed by modern industry erected on the foundation of machinery." Capital, Vol. 1, pg. 432.

The worker spends the largest single part of his life in the factory. The factory regime, which compels his attention to a trivial and atomised aspect of production having little or no intellectual content, (on the assembly line this is carried to its highest point) must make him one-sided, lower his sensibilities, make him less a man and more a machine. The bureaucratic regime within the factory, inevitably reproduces itself outside the factory in many other spheres of bourgeois society. In bourgeois parliaments it is not labourers, but rather bourgeois "friends of labour" who represent the working class as a general rule. In the labor movement, union leadership becomes a profession for which one prepares at a university. The separation of manual and mental labour is reproduced outside the factory.

The individual factory or workshop is the cell of modern economic life, but in order for economic life to be carried on there must be an exchange and proportion between the cells. Thus sooner or later, the capitalist is called forth from this sphere where he is all powerful to enter another, the market, where he in turn is subordinated by the law of the market.

CAPITALISM IS PLANLESS

As soon as he steps out of the factory and into the market where the relations between the different factories are determined by exchange of their products, it becomes apparent that capitalism
is a system of contrasts. Within his factory the capitalist is a firm believer in economic planning, and planning of the most dictatorial and exclusive type. But outside the factory, to the contrary, capitalism is planless or to be more specific it is not planned by men, but rather by impersonal economic laws. "The same bourgeoisie mind which praises the division of labour in the workshop, life-long annexation of the labourer to a partial operation, and his complete subjection to capital, as being an organisation of labor that increases its productiveness -- that same bourgeoisie mind denounces with equal vigour every conscious attempt to socially control and regulate the process of production as an inroad upon such sacred things as the rights of private property, freedom, and unrestricted play for the vent of the individual capitalist." Capital, Vol. I, pg. 391.

SUCCESSFUL PLANNING REQUIRES WORKERS CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

A successful planned economy cannot be achieved as long as the working class is excluded from the direction and management of production, i.e., as long as there is a sharp division between the mental and manual aspects of production. Planned economy requires the estimation of needs and capacity of thousands of workshops and factories, and the setting up of the proper relations and ratios between them. The task would exhaust the capacities of any small group of government bureaucrats no matter how expert they might be. While in the earliest phases of planned economy such groups would undoubtedly play an important role, every plan they originate for any individual shop would have to be subjected to discussion, revision or rejection of the workers in the shop who will judge the plan on the basis of their knowledge of the shop's productive capabilities. Furthermore the central planning boards themselves must be elected by and controlled by the producers themselves, i.e., the working class, on the basis of general programs they will put forward for the development of the economy. It will be possible for the working class to control the general aims of the plans of engineers, chemists, physicists, economists even if the workers may not themselves be thoroughly acquainted with engineering, chemistry, physics and economics, just as the capitalist class employs and controls scientists who manufacture atom bombs without understanding very much about the principles of nuclear physics.

BASIC INCOMPATIBILITY OF PLANNED ECONOMY AND CAPITALISM

It is of course obvious that such a system of planned economy can only be accomplished once society has destroyed the control of production exercised by the individual capitalist, i.e., once his private property in the means of production have been taken from him and made the collective property of the producing classes. In other words, the major means of production: factories, railroads, ships, mines, etc., must be collectivised and operated under the control of the working class. That is the first step toward socialism.

Such a program of workers control of production can only succeed if the working class raises its cultural level to meet the tasks the problems of society place before it. The first prerequisite of a higher cultural level is a shorter working day. Under capitalism, a
labor saving machine results in unemployment. Under the management of the working class it will result in more spare time for the laborer. Furthermore from the first day of the planned economy, each worker must strive to inform himself about where the raw materials used in his factory come from and where the finished products go, to familiarise himself with the bookkeeping system of his factory, and finally to understand the basic production problems of the entire economy. The more leisure time he has to inform himself on these matters, and the better informed he is, the less and less will be the difference between mental and manual labor.

As the working day is reduced, as the antagonism between and struggles in production disappear, as production becomes something men undertake of their own free will and not because they are compelled to, the need for foremen, special supervisors, speed-up men, etc., and all those whose job it is under capitalism to sweat profit out of the worker, will disappear and society will save the expenses of maintaining a special class which the present exploitative society makes necessary.

SOCIALIST PLANNING VERSUS STALINIST PLANNING

A planned economy without the democratic, socialistic control of the working class is indeed possible, but such planning will only replace the productive problems of capitalist society with others. In Stalinist Russia we have an example of a bureaucratically planned economy. Since there is no political democracy and since there is no workers control of production in the individual shop, the plan must be made and applied by a small privileged class of bureaucrats.

First of all this class encounters the greatest difficulty in correctly estimating the capacities and needs of the various industries and factories. Consequently, mistakes are constantly being made in the plan, and the system goes through period after period of acute shortages, plan failures and economic crises. Furthermore as long as the laborers are excluded from the management of production and confined to the dull, boring, emotionally and physically exhausting manual labor of the factory, he will work only under compulsion. Thus an antagonism arises between the different classes of special labor supervisors who must struggle with the working class to sweat the last ounce of labor from them. Production is not at the will of the producers but can be maintained only through a constant struggle between them and their exploiters.

The expense of maintaining a large class of such supervisory personnel is more than the Russian economy can stand, and the economy is consequently doomed to low living standards for the vast mass of the producers. Stalinist Russia resembles Socialism in its economic life only in one single outward superficial formal aspect. The means of production have been nationalised. But not a single one of the other aims of Socialism has been achieved. This is inevitable, since the Russian state excludes the working class from any control over the economic life of the country at every point within and without the productive process.

Only a planned economy organised and carried on by and for the producers whose productive efforts are being planned can hope to successfully organise production on a new basis, i.e., production according to the needs of the producers, in which they engage cooperatively and of their own free will. Only such an economy can be called socialist. Only such an economy can solve the present crisis of society.

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For several generations, in spite of occasional frictions, the capitalist mode of conducting economic life, i.e., by a rigid dictatorship within the factory, by the law of value without, met with no serious obstacles, and indeed mankind made no little progress under it. Today, however, it must be evident that the bourgeois system has entered a crisis.

First the economic laws under which capitalism operates no longer function as they should. Instead of bringing about the necessary proportions between the different industries, these laws now work to bring about greater and greater disproportions, resulting in depressions, unemployment, periods of relative overproduction and underproduction, monetary crises in the form of inflations and deflations, in other general economic dislocations which contrive to make capitalist production more and more difficult.

Secondly capitalism is marked by increasing antagonisms and open struggles, between the different classes in the productive sphere. In every important industry, both labor (in unions) and capital (in management associations) are organised in separate and distinct class organisations for the waging of this struggle. In many industries (such as the automobile and maritime industries) there is only an uneasy truce. In the coal industry, production is halted several times each year while the workers and owners test their strength. That the majority of capitalists and workers still believe that their antagonisms are ultimately reconcilable does not hide the fact that no matter what short term truce is reached, larger and larger numbers are involved in more and more of these struggles every year. But the process of production calls for cooperation between men. Any system of society which can only create greater and greater antagonisms in production, cannot organise production efficiently and has outlived its historical usefulness.

SOCIALISM - THE ONLY ROAD

Under capitalism, production is for the purpose of sale at a profit. What shall be produced and in what quantities it shall be produced, is not determined by men but rather by the economic laws of motion of the capitalist economy. The failure of these laws makes necessary a planned economy in which the producers themselves determine what and how much shall be produced in accordance with their needs.
concluded. "In this blood we must write the words: AN INDEPENDENT VIET NAM!" There were songs sung like a litany, and then the young people poured down the steps and across the marble lobby and out into the night, where lights shone on the cornice of the buildings, adorned at ten foot intervals with clusters of Viet Nam flags."

There are many other sections of the book important enough to spend a little time on. The "test tube" situation in Korea is one of the most potentially explosive centers in the Far East and at the same time one of the most revealing as concerns the real aims of the major world powers. In this land of 25 millions the imperialist conflict between the United States and Russia is reproduced in miniature. Where Japan ruled for 36 years, the U.S. Army now faces the Russians along a predetermined border and the pledges of independence made to Korea by the Big Three at Cairo are all but forgotten. Said a Korean to Isaac: "We spent long hard years learning Japanese......Now we must learn English or Russian..... When shall we be able to learn Korean?" The answer to that question was being gradually learned by the Koreans however, as it was similarly to be learned by the Indians, Indonesians, etc.

A brief, but nevertheless valuable summary of British imperialism in India as well as a review of the bankrupt reactionary feudal regime of Chiang Kai Shek and the criminal betrayal of the Chinese revolution by the Stalinists form other important sections of the book. There is an excellent analysis of Russia as an imperialistic national state, and comparisons are drawn between the revolutionary foreign policy of Russia in the days of Lenin and Trotsky with the imperialist policy of today. One example will here suffice to demonstrate the point that Isaac correctly makes; under Lenin, the Soviet Union was the first foreign government to sign a treaty with China renouncing certain "rights" and annexing nothing; under Stalin, Russia moved in and occupied Manchuria. Isaac's approach correctly renounces the idea that nationalization in itself is a progressive phenomenon. On the other hand, he denounces the United States and England as basically incapable of introducing the necessary factors that will put an end to the imperialist war. He is a bit hazy in any characterization of the last war as imperialist, but the issue is not mentioned at all and the conclusion that one must form from the contents of the volume certainly offers no contradiction to the idea. This seems to me rather petty, in view of the correctness of the author's approach to every question with which he does deal. This approach is itself quite clear. We cannot look to either the United States or Russia as they are at present constituted for a solution to the problem of war. Only a new social system with the power in the hands of "the great masses of labor and people at large, who have the most to gain from change", together with the oppressed of every part of the globe may yet be able to stem the rising tide of complete and total destruction.

Marty Young
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE
SOCIALIST YOUTH LEAGUE write or visit the local branch of our
adult organization, the Workers Party and mail in the interest
blank on the bottom of this page to the National Office of the
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