

STATE OF THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

WHITHER THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT?

The following is the second of two sets of notes prepared for a follow-up discussion on the state of the world communist movement, held in July 2000.

Understanding the rhythm of the process of change allows us to look objectively and optimistically at these difficult times. The crisis and polarization in the world communist movement are bound to be the prelude to the destruction of the communist movement on its old basis and a leap forward to a communist movement that is really for communism.

To unfold this and figure out its implications, we have to look at this crisis in what is known as the "communist movement" in its objective and historical context.

In the past epoch, the world communist movement was an ideological expression of a movement that was not objectively communist. In the 20th century, it grew, developed great strength, and, in some cases, achieved political power on the basis of the historical struggles to industrialize and against colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The world is clearly changing. Industrialization is no longer the predominant economic task today. And the struggle between colonies and neo-colonies, on the one hand, and imperialist countries, on the other, is no longer the dominant social polarity in the world. The beginning of production without work opens up the epoch of distribution according to need.

There is a world of difference between, on the one hand, a movement that was objectively and practically for reform but whose combatants were ideologically in favor of communism (or in support of the Soviet Union or China) and, on the other hand, a movement that is objectively and practically for communism and whose combatants are consciously communist.

This change puts the status of the world communist movement into perspective and places its current confusion and betrayal as a step in the process of change. The destruction of the old basis for the conscious communist movement destroys communism as the ideological shell for the national and reform struggles and makes possible the leap forward to communist ideology based on an objectively communist movement. Communism is not "dead" or on its way to oblivion. It is on the eve of its growth on an

objective foundation that compels its original vision.

This poses several questions for us as revolutionaries.

One is how we craft propaganda that meets people as they experience the new quality and to introduce the consciousness of this new quality, but to do so quantitatively -- because quantitatively is how people experience it. Another set of questions is about what type of organization of revolutionaries is needed not only for this stage but also for future stages of the revolutionary movement. The organizational forms of the communist parties that corresponded to the struggles against imperialism and for the reforms of an expanding system don't correspond to a struggle that is objectively for the reorganization of society along communal lines. We need to figure out the organizational challenges posed by a communist movement in its beginning stages of the leap to a new quality, that is, to being a subjective expression of a new objective process.

Our conception is that, for this stage of the revolution, we need a broad organization of revolutionaries committed to winning people to a broad and general conception of communism. But there's still a lot to figure out about how to build such an organization. We have said that we can unite the revolutionaries and win people to communism based not so much on the activity of the new class as on the basis of its program. What, then are the steps or stages of uniting the revolutionaries on that basis? How do we bring them into an organization on a very broad and fundamental basis and also strive to strengthen that organization politically and theoretically? Answering this question has something to do with the fundamental difference between this epoch and the epoch in which the organized communist movement accumulated most of its ideological and organizational experience.

And then there's the question of what type of organization of revolutionaries is needed to prepare to build in future stages of the revolution. Ultimately, at later stages, the revolution will need a different type of organization of revolutionaries. As we approach the stage of political revolution, will there again be a need for some sort of communist party that can accomplish the direction of the movement? If so, the existence of a "communist class" calls for the form of organization of communists to be different from the communist parties of the past epoch, which were, essentially, "Marxist parties."

The potential for the leap forward in the communist movement -- the real unity of the vision and ideology of communism with the objective goals of the social struggle -- makes both possible and essential a distinction between "communism as a vision and goal" and "Marxism as a science" of how to get there. But it also challenges revolutionaries to envision the type of organization of revolutionaries that will be needed for future stages of the revolution and to figure out how to build an organization that can unite an objectively communist social movement with its communist ideology. What type of organization can unite those who want to win the American people to the vision of communism? How do we use the science without making unity around the science a condition of unity of the broad organization of

revolutionaries?

For some revolutionaries, this moment in the world communist movement is one of great disappointment and a time to compromise principles. For others, it represents an opportunity to move ahead to meet new opportunities — a time of difficulty, yes, but overwhelmingly a time that promises big steps ahead.

We Marxists should use this time to think through these questions. It is not an idle question. Having a long-range view of what we have to prepare for in the future will help us envision the future and figure out the forms for our work at the current stage of the revolution.