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OF COMMUNISM

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AN A B C OF COMMUNISM

I. THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE

Men must live. Each day they need food, clothing, shelter, fresh air, sunshine, books, sports, music.

The struggle to live overshadows all other human activity. It is so fierce and so continuous that it colors and shapes and largely determines the entire lives of individuals and of communities.

The economic struggle devours the best hours of the day and the best years in the lives of most people. This struggle for wealth and power is the central theme of written history.

The economic struggle is waged on two general fronts: between men and nature, and between men and men.

The struggle with nature aims to wrest a living from the earth. In the course of this struggle, soil is cultivated; trees are cut down; coal, iron and copper are mined; cotton, petroleum and other raw materials are made ready for use; machines are constructed; power is developed; roads, bridges and railroads are built.

Men were often defeated by nature in the early days. Again and again wind and fire, drought, famine and disease destroyed them and their work.

Recently men have gained the upper hand. Machinery has enabled them to produce an abundance of life's necessities. Nature has been harnessed and forced at least in part, to do the will of man.

The production of abundant goods and services does not, however, end the economic struggle. There remains the question: how shall the product be divided?

Through the ages this question of distribution has been answered by the struggle between men and men,—the struggle for wealth, income, privilege, security and power.

Those who have taken part in this historic struggle over the division of property and income fall into one of two classes:

1. the workers, who perform productive and useful labor,
2. the robbers, who appropriate the products of labor under the slogan: you toil—we eat.

The workers may be subdivided into many groups: hand workers, managers, engineers, administrators, professionals, artists. In their various capacities they plow the land, dig the coal, assemble the machines, design and build the bridges, keep the accounts, write the books, and compose the music.

The robbers may be subdivided into grabbers who take active part in appropriating the wealth produced by the workers: bankers, pirates, bandits, real-estate operators, stock brokers, corporation lawyers, high-jackers, kidnappers, oil magnates, coal barons, steel kings; and grafters, who merely consume without taking any active part in the economic struggle: absentee landlords, stock, bond and mortgage holders, owners of annuities, kept families and other economic parasites.

Between the workers and the robbers lies a twilight zone occupied by the "middle" class. Robbers who have been plundered and broken by their more ferocious confreres, henchmen and retainers of the robber class, independent professional and small business people, workers climbing toward positions in the robber class,—all these make up the odd-lot middle class assortment. This class vacillates with the fortunes of the struggle, siding with the robbers when they win, and with the workers when they are victorious. The middle class hope is for peace, order, and a chance to live in security and comfort.

During the whole period of written history it is not the workers, but the robbers who have been in control of the world.

The great land-owners of Western Europe were in control at one stage. Their system of robbery was called feudalism.

At another stage, the owners of mines, factories, railroads and banks control. Their system of robbery is called capitalism.

Still another stage in the economic struggle is called communism. At that stage, the workers take control, and history turns a corner into an entirely new path.

Feudalism lies almost wholly in the past. Capitalism is rapidly disappearing. Communism lies mainly in the future. Many of our great-grandfathers lived under feudalism. We live under capitalism. Our children and grand-children will live under communism.

II. CAPITALISM—A ROBBERS WORLD

The robbers and their henchmen control capitalist society. They own the industries; they manage the government; they direct the news agencies and the schools; they shape the ideas. Since the overthrow of feudal society this class has held the wealth, income, privilege and power of the western world in its hands.

1. The Means of Production under Capitalism

Private individuals, under capitalism, own the land, mines, shops, factories, railroads and other means of production. Their ownership brings them a share of the value produced by the workers. This share is called profit.

Capitalists make their profit from mass commodity production. Workers no longer own their tools, their work places, raw materials and products as in the old days of hand industry. Instead, they work at specialized tasks in huge factories and mines or in vast railroad, telephone or chain-store systems. They no longer use what they produce, as did the farmer or pioneer. Instead, they turn out quantities of shoes, cotton goods, flour and such commodities for other people to consume.

The jobs on which the workers depend for their living are owned by the capitalists. No worker is permitted to work unless the owner of the job can sell the product of the worker's labor at a profit. In capitalist factories, shoes are not made because people need them, but because the factory owner is able to pocket a profit through their sale. If this profit cannot be made, he shuts down his factory even though the whole world goes barefoot.

The worker receives a wage or salary in exchange for eight or ten hours of labor-time per day. This wage is only a part of the value which he produces.

The jobowner takes the other part, the profit, in the form of interest and dividends, merely because he owns the tools of production. He receives interest and dividends not in exchange for any useful or productive service, but because as jobowner he is able to shut down the works unless a profit is forthcoming. Thus the capitalists through their control of the means of production dominate the lives of the wage-working masses.

2. Capitalist Institutions

The robbers, who own the means of production, also control the institutions of capitalist society.

The good things of life are reserved for the owning class by a simple device,—the payment of rent, interest and dividends to the holders of property titles. The corporation, with its "securities," has made the payment of this unearned income almost automatic.

The members of the owning class receive rent, interest and dividends in direct proportion to the amount of their property. The man who has a one thousand dollar bond receives \$50 per year as interest; the man who has 100 such bonds receives \$5000 per year as interest. Any person who owns 100 bonds is assured

of a regular income of \$100 weekly as long as he holds title to this amount of income-yielding securities.

This system of income distribution gives the property owners a guaranteed, regular, and in many cases, a very large income. In the U. S. A. in 1929 there were 38,889 persons who reported incomes of more than \$1,000 per week, and 335,143 who reported incomes between \$200 and \$1,000 per week. The bulk of the higher incomes came from interest, dividends and profit.

The sharp division between the owning, ruling class and the working, exploited masses runs through every aspect of capitalist society. The rich, those who have much wealth and income, are generally property owners. The poor, those who have less than enough wealth and income to preserve physical health and social decency, are generally workers.

A social system in which rich grafters idle and sport while poor workers toil is out of balance. At any moment the workers may seize the property of the grafters and end a system under which over-fed wastrels and impoverished toilers live side by side. History records many such revolutionary endeavors. To thwart them, the owning class has developed the modern state.

The business-class state, in such countries as France, Japan and the United States, is an organized, armed force used by the owning class to protect its property and its privileges both at home and abroad. The most powerful single weapon of the state is the mass-murder machine, the army and navy.

The capitalist class does not depend upon clubs and guns alone to hold power. On the contrary, these are a last resort. The chief day-to-day ruling class weapons are the agencies of propaganda.

Over the radio, through the press, in the schools, in movies, prayer meetings, Sunday schools and church services, the ruling class reiterates the ideas which it desires the workers to hear, and plays upon the passions, prejudices and superstitions that it has helped to foster. Big business men and their hirelings sift all of the food for thought that goes to the masses. Only where the workers have their own press, schools and forums can they get news uncensored by their exploiters and oppressors.

3. Capitalist Ideas

Through this propaganda-machine capitalist spokesmen have spread certain ideas.

One of these ideas—probably the most important for the owning class—makes private property sacred. Capitalists foster this idea in the hope that it will prevent the workers from socializing

the factories and railroads which the workers themselves have built and with which they produce the world's wealth.

A second idea—individualism—holds that men should struggle over the distribution of wealth and income until the simple and kindly have been defeated—impoverished,—and the cunning and greedy have survived—become wealthy. Human nature is said to demand such a survival struggle.

Men should prize wealth and income very highly according to a third idea,—because they provide the chief satisfactions in life.

Those who seek happiness can hope to secure it in proportion as they accumulate wealth and income. This fourth idea leads men to spend their lives piling up property in the hope of finding happiness.

Since the great source of happiness is the accumulation and use of wealth and income, success is measured by the amount of goods accumulated. Those who win in the competitive struggle, according to this fifth idea, have wealth and happiness as their reward.

The possession of vested wealth, with its guarantee of comfort and security, enables the possessor to live without working on the labor of others. This sixth idea makes parasitism the goal of accumulation.

The means of production, the institutional life, and the ideas in capitalist society thus centre about the accumulation of wealth and the control of unearned income. The chief task of the capitalist class is the protection of wealth and the multiplication of income.

4. The Rise and Decline of Capitalism

Capitalism has not always been what it is today. Like other social systems it has grown from youth to maturity and from maturity to doddering old age.

In its youth, capitalism included many small-scale local businesses. This was the period when any rugged individual could try his hand at profit-making and with some hope of success.

The corporations soon stepped in, however. One by one, rail-roading, oil production, mining, steel manufacturing, building construction and merchandizing were swallowed up by great trusts and monopolies.

As capitalism matured, the accumulating profits concentrated in the banks gave the bankers such control over the business system that they were able to dictate its policy. They pushed the trust magnates from the centres of power. The capitalist system thus passed through the monopoly stage and entered the stage of bank capitalism or financial imperialism.

Profit can be made only so long as the capitalist can find a market for his product. When home markets were exhausted, foreign markets were ransacked until the ends of the earth were reached.

Profit, invested by the profiteers in new machines, added to the stream of unearned income flowing into the coffers of the owning class. Profit bred profit. Each extension of the market heaped up new accumulations.

The production machine, stimulated and enlarged by the growing stream of profit, turned out a greater and greater volume of unbought goods. When the warehouses were filled, the factories shut down, throwing men and women on the street. These unemployed workers, deprived of their income, could no longer buy. The decrease of buying power closed additional factories. Side by side were the surpluses of capital,—goods, machines, bank funds; and the surpluses of population,—unemployed and part-time workers.

This surplus capital played havoc with the rate of profit. The more capital accumulated, the more bitter was the struggle between rival capitalists for the always insufficient market. In the course of this struggle the profit rate was forced nearer and nearer to zero. In 1932 and 1933 commercial banks in Amsterdam and London paid one-half and one-quarter of one percent per year, and the United States government was able to borrow on ninety-day notes at one-tenth of one percent. The rate of profit had fallen to practically zero and the driving force of profit economy had been temporarily destroyed.

The struggle for a vanishing profit led to mad orgies of speculation; to huge over-investment in productive tools, and to devastating wars. Cunningly devised machines became terrible weapons. The tractor was turned into the tank; the airplane dropped fire-bombs; chemists made deadly gases and high explosives. These new weapons destroyed property wholesale and murdered the people in masses.

Human nature had not changed. Men did not hate their fellows any more bitterly. On the contrary, trade, travel, newspapers, the news-reel and the radio were bringing people closer together than ever they had been before. Chaos and disintegration followed organized destruction and mass murder because the capitalist system had begun to break up. Accumulating surpluses, falling profits, deepening economic depression and intensified struggle for markets were the measures of capitalist decline.

While capitalism was still young and growing, it forced its way out of periodic depression into periodic eras of prosperity, when profit again accumulated until it glutted the market. After the

expansion of capitalism ceased and the decline began, depression went deeper and recovery became more difficult. What were at first temporary stoppages of profit-making became more or less chronic breakdowns.

Another factor in capitalist dissolution was the struggle of the working class to free itself from poverty, war and capitalist oppression. During the period of capitalist expansion this class struggle had blazed up again and again. It redoubled in the period of capitalist decline.

Throughout the entire capitalist era, the working masses had been exploited. In peace times they were factory fodder; in war time, cannon fodder. Their wages were held down, their labor was speeded-up. In periods of hard times they suffered from mass unemployment. Even during eras of prosperity masses of workers lived in poverty.

Only by organizing trade unions, cooperatives and political parties; only by strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and open insurrection were the workers able to wring reluctant concessions from the job-owners.

In the early years this struggle of the working class was directed to securing a decent living under capitalism. When it became evident that this was impossible, the class conscious workers led a movement that aimed to organize a communist society. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 this movement of the masses became the decisive, positive factor in world history.

The robbers did everything in their power to retain their property and to continue the struggle for profit. The workers moved forward toward a cooperative society in which goods and services would be produced for use.

III. SPEEDING UP HISTORY

1. The World Moves On

Historic forces are pushing the human race toward communism. Expanding capitalism destroyed feudalism and provided the technical and organizational mechanism necessary for the building of a communist society. During the capitalist era, many important contributions were made to social advance. Science was expanded. The machine was developed. New means of transport and communication were opened up. Manufacture, mining, trade and finance were organized in larger units. Millions of workers and technical experts were trained to run the big productive enterprises. Provincial boundaries crumbled, isolation and localism

were driven back and the dream of a world society seemed near to realization.

The social forces released under capitalism provided the means of historic advance up to a certain point. Like all forces, however, those of capitalist society have their limitations. When the limits are reached, breakdown begins.

The cycle of capitalist rise and decline is in one sense independent of man's will or wish. Before capitalism was dreamed of, in ages when the science of society was unknown, social systems came and went with the rhythmic beat that underlies all history.

Social forces, once released, have a drive like that of running water, which persistently seeks its level. After the power-loom was invented, the hand-weavers struggled in vain to compete with its productivity. Equally helpless are wandering tribes before railroads, motor trucks and machine guns. Men can control water. They can build dams, reservoirs, locks, electric generators, and compel the water to serve them as it moves from the mountains to the sea. But the water goes on running.

Men can control historic forces in the same sense that they control running water. It is impossible to wish the power-loom or the locomotive out of existence. It is impossible to destroy them and their kind with dynamite. But it is possible to use them to provide the clothing and the transport so necessary to certain phases of life.

Men cannot sit idly by and expect that historic changes will bring them what they want, any more than they can sit idly and expect that running water will provide them with finished goods. There is no necessary connection between historic forces and human desires.

A farmer depends upon soil, rain, wind and sun to mature and ripen his crops. But these forces will produce weeds as well as wheat. From them also come frost, flood, drought, hail and tornadoes. To the forces of nature the farmer adds fertilizer, drainage, irrigation, seed selection, soil inoculation, spraying, pruning, thinning, cultivation. By such means, natural forces are utilized and nature is in many directions surpassed.

Similarly, social forces move like the forces of nature—powerfully, often fiercely. It is necessary to study, plan, experiment, organize, direct. Men can surpass history as they surpass nature. But they must have their eyes open and their wits about them if they are to succeed.

Unless man can administer and govern, he must live the life of a slave. There is no half way house. Society, like nature, is a good servant but a cruel task-master. These general principles of social organization, control and direction apply with particular

force to a world swept through chaos toward wholesale disaster by contradictory and conflicting social forces.

The 19th century gave men a false sense of security. While capitalism was expanding, the outlook seemed bright. A century before the breakdown that began in or around 1910, however, thinkers like Godwin, Sismondi, and Saint Simon warned of the coming disaster. A little later, Marx devoted a lifetime of study and analysis to proving that the capitalist system must collapse because of the accumulation of profit.

Today the decline of capitalism is far advanced. Anyone who looks may see it. The immediate question is one of procedure: How can the remains of a decaying capitalist society be cleared away so that the work of building a communist society may go forward speedily and efficiently?

2. The Robbers Resist Change

Like all owning-ruling classes, the capitalist robbers resist every threat against their wealth, income and power. Even though they know that their system is failing and that millions suffer through the chaos and disorder involved in its decay, they cling to their property and privileges as a man of three-score-years-and-ten clings to life.

The feudal landlords continued to rule in Western Europe long after their reason for existence had disappeared. The English Revolutions of 1642 and 1688 and the French Revolution of 1789 broke their power. They lingered on in Russia until 1905, and in parts of Central Europe they are still in control.

The beneficiaries of an old, broken-down order, lingering on into a new era, know only one rule,— the preservation of their property and their privileges. To gain this end they will tear up treaties, break laws, trample on constitutions, fly in the face of public opinion, violate every principle of social decency and of common humanity. They destroy property, torture, mutilate, murder. There is no act too vile and low, no deed too monstrous for them to commit.

Let the reader who feels that these words are too strong, and who believes that "at any rate, our best people would never do such things," review history. The best people in France during the old regime, and again after the Paris Commune in 1871; the best people in Russia before 1917, and again during the counter-revolutions from 1918 to 1921; the best people in Finland, Poland and Hungary in 1918 to 1920; the best people in China between 1926 and 1932; the best people in Germany in 1933; the best people in the United States when the Negroes in the South, or the I. W. W.,

or other militant workers in the industrial areas threaten their property and privileges,—burned, tortured, mutilated and massacred. And this is only one little part of the historic record,—a few well-known instances picked here and there from the ghastly story of rapine that accompanies and follows any effort of the downtrodden and the oppressed to free themselves from bondage and suffering.

Only when the oppressed win,—only when they are successful in taking and holding power, can they hope to escape from the terrible suffering that accompanies the decay and death of a social system on the one hand, or the equally terrible punishment meted out by the robbers to those workers who dare reach a hand toward ruling class property and privilege.

Death is a racking experience. And when that death is engulfing a whole social system, upon which hundreds of millions depend for their living; when it is being fought off by the entrenched forces of property and privilege; when it is accompanied by war, mass unemployment, the depopulation of the great cities and wholesale suffering and starvation, it assumes an aspect so frightful that even the most courageous may well draw back horrified by what the immediate future holds.

But death has a counter-part,—birth. While one social system is dying, another is being born. Those who would speed history at this juncture must find out how the death agonies may be shortened and the birth process hastened.

The wage workers of the world (the proletariat) must act as grave diggers for capitalism at the same time that they serve as midwife for communism.

3. The Proletarian Revolutionary Movement

The proletarian revolutionary movement is composed of men and women who are consciously striving to clear away the remnants of a declining capitalism and to build the structure of communism.

Specialized, mass machine production piled up unwieldy mountains of surplus capital that played a chief role in destroying the capitalist system. At the same time, it called into being the mass wage-worker, the proletarian.

The life of the proletarian is characterized by poverty, by insecurity and by a certain flat sameness that accompanies "belt-life." No human being can rejoice in the endless monotony enshrouding the lives of machine tenders and tenement dwellers. Even when that monotony is punctuated by sport-events and movie-shows, it still oppresses. Since the beginning of capitalist

economy the proletarian masses have felt the pressure of their chains.

The masters of capitalism have been compelled to supply the wage workers with those very weapons by which their chains were finally to be broken. The most important of these weapons was education.

A slave needed no education. An industrial worker is almost useless without it. Capitalism therefore educated its workers. It also trained them to work in specialized, coordinated groups.

Mass workers educated and trained to cooperative effort were not slow in planning and launching their own cooperative endeavors,—trade unions, cooperative societies, benefit associations, labor schools, newspapers and publishing houses. These activities had their beginning in England before the end of the 18th century. They arose in the United States after 1815. Through the 19th century they spread steadily across those countries where capitalist society had made its greatest advances.

Wage workers, the world over, were reaching out for some means of escape from exploitation. They were convinced that with ample resources and efficient machines the earth could be made to yield an abundance of good things for the entire human race.

At first this movement toward a new world order aimed to set up ideal communities or colonies as oases in the midst of capitalist society. Then came the era of "scientific socialism." Marx, Engels and their followers showed that capitalism is a stage of history which is passed through, just as the individual, in growing up, passes through the stage of childhood. Only when capitalism had matured, they argued, could it give place to a socialist society. The new socialist world could not be set up in some isolated commune. Rather it would arise from the ruins of the decaying capitalist world. "Within the body of the old society," Marx wrote, "are the seeds of its own destruction." Capitalist society had been born from the body of a declining feudalism. Likewise must communism be born from the body of a declining capitalism.

But these developments did not and could not take place automatically. The business class fought for centuries with economic and military weapons before they gained the upper hand in their struggle to wrest power from the feudal landlords. The wage-workers in their turn must organize; must assemble what allies they can find among the farmers and the impoverished middle classes; must take advantage of every opportunity to train themselves and discipline their ranks by struggling against the exploitation of the owning class. Only by such means are they

prepared to seize power and to begin the work of socialist construction.

These teachings were contained in the **Communist Manifesto**. They were elaborated in **Wage-Labor and Capital** and in **Capital**. Marx summed up his observations of revolutions in **Revolution and Counter-Revolution** and in **Civil War in France**.

The teaching of Marx and Engels had a great influence upon the proletarian movement from 1875 to 1914. The workers throughout the capitalist world organized and struggled with the object of taking over economic and political power. In Great Britain, Germany, the United States and elsewhere the movement grew. By 1910 the trade unions alone had a world membership of about eleven millions.

These trade unions were united in an international organization. The Socialist Parties also formed an international organization. The chief Socialist Parties composing this Socialist or Second International were committed to the principle of legal rather than direct (illegal) action. They held that socialism could be won gradually,—one step at a time.

As the world moved toward war in 1911 and 1912, the Socialist Parties warned, protested, and demonstrated against war. They exhorted the workers in all countries to be loyal to their class interests and, in the event of a declaration of war, to begin a general strike.

Toward the end of July 1914, the European armies were mobilized, and the ruling class in every European capital turned to the Socialist and trade union leaders with the question: "Will you help defend your country?" A few, like Liebknecht in Germany and Jaures in France, refused. The great majority accepted responsible positions and prepared to help the imperialists win the war. After three years of fighting, the Russian masses revolted. It was more than four years before the German and Austrian masses deserted the trenches and turned to the task of driving their ruling classes from power.

4. The Workers Seize Power

The movement toward a workers society was well under way before 1914. It was unequally advanced, however, as a result of the unequal development of capitalism in different countries.

The War of 1914 racked and strained capitalist society to the breaking point. Where it was weakest it gave way, and through the gaping seams that opened in the structure of ruling class authority, the working masses rushed to seize power.

The Mexican masses were first. By 1916 they had gained the

upper hand in the states of Morelos and Yucatan. Early in 1917 they were able to write the most radical constitution of the time.

Russian workers in 1917 began a revolution that put all power into the hands of the Soviets—where it has rested ever since.

Workers in Germany, in Austria-Hungary and in Italy followed suit (1918-1920). In Bavaria and in Hungary, short-lived Soviet governments were established.

Workers in China, between 1922 and 1926, rolled up a revolutionary wave that threatened for a time to overthrow the power of the imperialists throughout the Far East. Although the movement was checked in 1927, it resulted in the organization of the present Chinese Soviet government.

The propertied and privileged classes, led by Fascists, drove back the workers in Italy, the Danubian countries and Germany. Only in Russia and China were the masses able to hold power. In Russia after 1917 they busied themselves with the task of socialist construction.

The socialist parties had surrendered their revolutionary leadership by helping the imperialists win the war. The principal trade union organizations had followed suit. The Russian Bolsheviks alone called on the workers everywhere to turn on their masters, convert the imperial war into civil war, seize power and begin the task of building socialism.

For a time, in 1918, it looked as though the workers, at least in Central Europe, might answer the Bolshevik call. Then as the Socialist leaders with the aid of the police and the army regained their hold on the masses, the Bolsheviks organized the Third or Communist International and the Red Trade Union International.

The Third International is the Communist Party. Sections of that Party are organized in more than fifty different countries. The Party policy is decided at its congresses and interpreted by an executive committee which sits constantly at Party headquarters. The Executive Committee is composed of members from the various sections of the Party—England, France, Belgium and other countries.

The Second and Third Internationals differ in their theories of revolution as well as in their forms of organization. The parties composing the Second International have generally taught that a socialist society could be established by voting for members of parliament, enacting laws and where necessary, rewriting the constitution. "The British workers can accomplish by act of parliament all that the Russian workers gained by revolution," Ramsay MacDonald wrote in his book **Parliament and Revolution**.

Not so, answered Lenin in *State and Revolution*. The political government of any capitalist country is merely an executive committee of the capitalist class, backed of course by the police and the army. Talk of socialism through the election of representatives in a capitalist parliament only serves to deceive the masses. When the workers become class conscious,—that is, when they understand that the new world order must be built by and for the workers,—they have no choice but to organize, seize economic and political power and begin the building of socialism.

Second International theory has never led to any important or lasting victory for the workers. In Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, France, Spain and England, where Socialist Parties in the years since 1919 have been strong enough to be invited into coalition governments, or to organize ministries, they have uniformly failed to begin the establishment of socialism by gradual, legal means.

Instead, in one country after another, they have been and are being driven back. In Germany, where they had more than a million dues-paying members, and at the maximum, cast more than eleven million votes, their legal organization has been completely destroyed.

Only in the Soviet Union and in Soviet China have the workers been able to begin the work of building socialism. In both countries the movement followed the policies of the Third International.

According to the theories of the Third International, workers who are striving to establish communism must begin by building a framework within which communism may be organized. The period during which this framework is being built is described as the era of socialist construction.

The theories of the Second and Third Internationals differ, one from the other, in another important respect. The Second International propaganda is built upon the nation as the unit of organization, while the Third International propaganda is built upon the world soviet of workers. One sees a world of nations. The other sees a world of workers, divided not by national boundaries, but by occupations.

The revolutionary wave that accompanied and followed the War of 1914 reached its height in 1917-18. After that it subsided. By 1924 European capitalists had drawn up the Dawes Plan, and with financial help from the United States, had re-established their control. But the half of Europe that had followed Bolshevik leadership remained under the red flag of communism.

IV. COMMUNISM—A WORKERS WORLD

The workers control communist society. This is the most important single difference between capitalism and communism.

Under capitalism the robbers hold power. They own the industries, manage the government, direct the radio and the schools, and shape the ideas.

Under communism the workers hold power. Through their trade unions, cooperatives, sport organizations, educational agencies, and political parties, they control and manage the industries and the government, direct the radio and the schools, and shape the ideas.

The struggle between man and man for the possession of individual wealth is the chief feature of capitalist society. The struggle against nature is of secondary importance.

Under communism the workers cooperate to master nature. With them the battle for abundance is primary. Once this abundance is secured, it is shared among those who cooperated in its production, thus avoiding the wolf-struggle between man and man which dominates the economic life of capitalist society.

Capitalism is a social system run by and for grabbers and grafters.

Communism is a social system run by and for workers.

Under communism, since all able-bodied men and women do their share of productive and useful work, all are workers. Grabbers and grafters are treated as horse thieves, pickpockets and highwaymen are treated under capitalism. For the first time in history, society is run by and for those who do the world's work.

1. The Means of Production under Communism

The scientific organization of the economic system, including the use of efficient machines, enlarges the control that men exercise over nature, protects the community against uncertainty, and provides an abundance of goods and services. Communism therefore uses the most up-to-date machinery and the most efficient methods for converting raw materials into the goods and services upon which life and well-being depend. Institutions of research are established in every field of human endeavor; inventors are encouraged to work out new ideas; schools provide special training for those who show talent in any and every field of social activity.

Every effort is made in a communist society to concentrate human energy, intelligence and activity on the problem of getting the best possible living with the least possible outlay of materials

and labor. The danger of overproduction is past. Hunger no longer gnaws and drives. Men and women work to raise their standards of living; to gain more leisure; to broaden and deepen life's experiences.

The machines are of course socially owned. Just as in capitalist society, the schools, streets and post-offices are social property, in a communist society the mines, factories, railroads, stores and banks are also social property. Schools are not run under capitalism to make a profit for some grabber. They provide education for those who need it. Factories are not run under communism to make a profit for some grafter. They provide shirts and shoes for those who need them.

Under a communist use-economy the mines and factories continue to operate until the needs of the people have been met. If these needs can be met in eight hours of labor, each able-bodied adult is expected to perform eight hours of productive and useful labor. If the needs can be met in half the time, the working day is set at four hours.

A socialized, use-economy will run smoothly only in case it is carefully planned and well managed. Communists therefore draw up general economic plans. In each locality, and in each district or region, as well as at the central planning office, experts are busy with maps, charts and figures. If their plans are well made and executed, the goods and services produced will be sufficient to provide necessities and comforts for those who need them.

After all, what are social engineers for? They should be responsible for food, clothing, shelter, health, education and recreation, just as civil engineers are responsible for bridges and roads.

The means of production cannot be successfully localized in any part of the world or by any race, group or gang. The oil of Persia, the nickel of Canada, the lumber of Russia, the iron of Alabama and Michigan, are all necessary in the organization of a socialized, planned economy. They can be used to the greatest advantage only when they are handled on a world scale.

Communist economy is therefore a world economy, built around a world plan. By this means, the entire human race will cooperate to raise the standard of human life for everyone everywhere.

The project sounds ambitious. It is. Before the age of steam, steel and electricity, it was impossible. A robbers society could not even attempt it. A socialized, planned, world economy is the first contribution of communism to the advance of the human race.

2. Communist Institutions

Communist institutions take their color from the means of production employed in communist society. The rise of a social-

ized, planned, world economy is accompanied by the development of many important communist institutions.

First in importance among communist institutions is a unified, classless society. Socialization destroys profit. With profit goes the basis for class divisions. Sharp cleavages between classes, and even between national and racial groups disappear or are materially reduced in a society where each person has the same chances as every other person for food, sunshine, recreation and education.

People under communism are not all alike. On the contrary, each has a chance to develop his particular talents. But the development of individual talent does not emphasize the division of human beings into classes and nations and races. It makes it possible for all to contribute and cooperate in providing those productive and useful services upon which the well-being of all depends.

Communist society develops a system of public administration which controls and directs all public activities, as the school board and the board of health carry on administrative work under capitalism. Besides health and education, public administration under communism includes manufacturing, transport, agriculture, building, and all other public services. Whatever is of public importance is publicly administered.

Public administration does not necessarily mean central administration. A town, for example, administers its bus-lines, its schools, its water systems; but the railroad, running through the town is directed by the authorities of the district in which it operates.

Workers control every phase of public administration in a communist society. From the factory committees and the local town councils to the central executive committees of trade unions, cooperatives, and other administrative bodies, those who do the productive and useful services upon which the well-being of all watch over their doings. Grabbers are always ready to seize privileges for themselves. The moment workers relax their vigilance, the grabbers get busy.

Communist society provides social insurance covering accident, sickness, unemployment, old age and any other chance occurrences that may prevent the individual from enjoying a full life. Instead of asking each man and woman to carry these risks, a communist society assumes them. In this way, the racking uncertainties that wear down the lives of millions under capitalism are avoided. Individual risk is absorbed by social cooperation.

Communism guarantees a livelihood. All adults who perform productive and useful service, all children, all incapacitated, and all aged persons come under this guarantee. Through the ages,

whole sections of the race have lived in poverty, cursed and haunted by hunger and suffering. Machinery makes poverty unnecessary. Communism, using efficient machinery in a socialized planned, world economy, guarantees the necessities and comforts of life to every human being.

With this guarantee of livelihood goes the sharing of leisure and opportunity. In a class-divided society, the robbers monopolize both leisure and opportunity. They remain at home when they feel indisposed; winter in the south; buy the best books; send their children to college; enjoy the best plays and the best music. They can do this because they hold the wealth and power of society in their hands. Communism socializes both by wiping out class differences. Those who do the productive and useful work of the world, share the leisure and the opportunity that their work makes possible.

Guaranteed livelihood and socialized opportunity are possible only in a classless society, where all public affairs are administered by the workers. These institutions of communist society are built upon a socialized, planned, world economy.

3. Communist Ideas

Communist society gives rise to ideas that are directly related to the means of production and the dominant institutions of communism. First among these ideas, the communists hold that the good things of life come through labor. Robbers, who live without working on the fat of the land, have as the motto of their system of exploitation: "You work: we eat." Workers, who depend upon productive and useful service for their livelihood, have as their motto: "He that will not work, neither shall he eat."

Not work alone but cooperative activity is essential to human well-being. Communism teaches and practices mutual aid in all phases of life.

The chief source of satisfaction under communism lies, therefore, in decent social relations. People trained under communism are prepared, first, to make their contribution of productive and useful service, and second, to maintain satisfactory relations with their fellow beings.

Their happiness comes through success in rendering productive and useful services and in maintaining decent social relations. The measure of success is the extent to which any individual contributes in one or both of these directions.

The goal of a communist society is a higher level of living. The service that each member of the community renders is judged in terms of its effect on community life. The greatest successes

are registered by those who make the most helpful contributions to community living.

The ideas fostered under capitalism centre about property, consumption and the accumulation of material things to the point of permanent parasitism.

The ideas fostered under communism centre about cooperation, service, and the efforts to convert cooperation and service into a higher standard of social living.

4. Socialist Construction in the Soviet Union

The era of socialist construction is the first stage of communism.

Some difference of opinion arose as to whether communism could be built in one country while the rest of the world remained capitalist. The Bolshevik majority, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, insisted that some one country could and must begin. The unequal development of capitalism made this inevitable. Since the opportunity had come to the Russian workers, they had no choice but to go on with the work of socialist construction doing what they could meanwhile to encourage a world revolution.

The Russian means of production were therefore socialized,—first the resources, public utilities and manufacturing industries, then the distributive trades. Finally in 1929 began the socialization of the 26 million farms in the Soviet Union.

Soviet economy is socialized and planned. It cannot be a world economy except in theory while the other parts of the world cling to capitalism. Planning began in 1919. The first general plans were published in 1924-25. It was not until 1928 that the First Five Year Plan was officially launched.

After 1921, when the civil wars ended with the expulsion of British, French, Japanese and United States troops and the defeat of the White armies, standards of production and of living began to rise. They have risen steadily ever since. They rose while capitalist countries were enjoying prosperity. They rose even more rapidly under the First Five Year Plan, while capitalism was being shattered by the general economic crisis.

With the rise in the standard of living, and as a necessary part of it, has gone a decrease in the death rate, a reduction in sickness, an increase in school attendance, in the number of theatres, concert halls and opera houses. More newspapers, magazines and books are printed. As the hours of labor have been reduced, the opportunities for recreation and education have been enlarged.

The nucleus of socialist construction is the socialist city, where work places, housing, education, recreation, health and other phases of human existence are planned for in advance. Hundreds

of such cities are being built from the Baltic to the boundaries of the Soviet Union in the Far East and in Central Asia.

Soviet institutions have been transformed to meet the needs of the workers. While remnants of the old exploiting classes remain, the workers are given preference over them. Backward national groups and exploited minorities receive special assistance in their efforts to advance their standard of living. Women have economic and political equality with men. Health and recreation activities are socialized, and together with education, are immensely broadened. A new system of criminology is being established. Illiteracy is reduced. Poverty is abolished and slums are replaced by modern homes. The whole energy of the masses is directed, under the stimulus of socialist competition, to eliminate the last vestiges of capitalism and to struggle forward toward a classless society.

5. Later Stages in Communism

Socialist construction is the first stage of communism. There will be other stages.

This first stage, said Lenin, will be dominated by the slogan: He that will not work, neither shall he eat. And this stage must continue until socialist construction has proceeded far enough to guarantee the necessities of life to everyone.

An assured abundance of goods and services will mark the end of this first stage, and will begin a second stage of communism organized under the slogan: From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs. Men and women will be expected to perform their share of work in exchange for the necessities and comforts of life. Capitalist opposition will have disappeared. The world will be in control of the workers. A strong, coercive state will no longer be needed. Economic life will be in large measure decentralized. Then the state will "wither away," and the second stage of communism will have been completed.

Since industry will have been decentralized, and the strong, coercive state will have disappeared, communist society at the end of this second stage will be operated from many different centres, joined together by a skeleton of common administrative functions, but depending chiefly upon local initiative.

During the first stage of communism, nature is sufficiently mastered to provide abundance for the race. Because of this abundance, and because of the social discipline involved in sharing work and leisure, grabbing as a method of making a living will be as unusual and as outlawed as is cannibalism today.

The economic life of the world will be socialized and planned.

Each local community will enjoy cultural autonomy. Each member of the community will be given the equal of a college education, and outside of a few hours work per day,—perhaps three or four, extending over 20 or 25 or 30 years,—the individual will be free to follow his own bent and to live his life to the fullest extent of his capacity. Thus will begin the third stage of communism.

Such ideas are called utopian today. But socialist construction was also called utopian in 1875. Only after half a century of capitalist imperialism was the historic stage prepared for the socialist construction that is now going forward in the Soviet Union. Similarly the first stage of communism will prepare the way for the second, and after the first two stages are completed, the world will be ready for what "utopian dreamers" now call a free society.

V. A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Communism is a form of social organization; a stage in social history; a distinctive way of life.

Capitalism is a form of social organization; a stage in social history; a way of life. Based on profit economy; bulwarked behind class privileges; defended by the strong arm of the state, capitalism advanced along the path of profit accumulation toward a goal of parasitism. Under capitalism, social life centres about competition, and individual life about accumulation.

Communism builds toward a socialized, planned world economy, directed by workers in a classless society, where social life centres about cooperation, and individual life about productive and useful service.

Capitalism as a way of life stamped men and women with its mark,—the mark of the life and death survival struggle; the mark of corroding luxury; the mark of grinding poverty; the mark of a human race divided by means of languages, nationalities and religions into rival competing and warring groups. Under capitalism the race was branded by greed, graft and the ceaseless struggle for bread.

Communism as a way of life stamps men and women with its mark,—the mark of cooperative endeavor; the mark of peace that comes with a sense of security; the mark of creative effort; of joyous service; the mark of a life based upon a variety of cultural interests; the mark of responsible social action and of the individual desire to share, to work, and to dream.

Capitalism produced a type of human life that differed notably

from feudalism, although both systems were based on grab and graft.

Communism modifies the social pattern much more profoundly because the communist world has outlawed grab and graft. In their place it puts cooperation and creative services.

Communism is a way of life that differs from capitalism far more profoundly than capitalism differed from feudalism. It holds before the human race the promise of a new life on earth,—a life to be had for the building. The first stage in that building,—the first stage of communism,— is the socialist construction with which the workers are now busying themselves in the Soviet Union.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING AND STUDY

Workers and students desiring additional information on Communism should write for a list of pamphlets to Workers Library Publishers, 50 E. 13th Street, New York City and for a list of books to International Publishers, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City. Those living in or near New York City can attend classes and courses on this and kindred subjects at the Workers School, 35 E. 12th Street, New York City.

Some important books and pamphlets dealing with the subject of Communism are:

Bukarin, N. and Preobrazhensky, E.

The A. B. C. of Communism
London: Communist Party of Great Britain 1922

Engels, Frederick

Landmarks of Scientific Socialism
Chicago: Kerr 1907

Origin of the Family, the State and Private Property
Chicago: Kerr 1902

Revolution and Counter-Revolution
New York: International 1933

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific
Chicago: Kerr 1913

Foster, W. Z.

Toward Soviet America
New York: Coward McCann 1932

Lapidus, I. and Ostrovityanov, K.

An Outline of Political Economy
New York: International 1928

Laski, H. J.

Communism
London: Williams and Norgate 1927

Lenin, N.

Imperialism

New York: International 1934

The State and Revolution

New York: International 1933

What is to be Done?

New York: International 1929

Marx, Karl

The Civil War in France

New York: International 1933

The Communist Manifesto

New York: International 1933

Critique of the Gotha Programme

New York: International 1933

Stalin, J.

Foundations of Leninism

New York: International 1932

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