

WHY COMMUNISM CAN WIN

Nearly 20,000 copies of *Mobilize the Masses for Communism* have been distributed. We will dedicate the next series of dialectical materialism columns to deepening our understanding and practice around this line. Please read and study them with your fellow workers and let us know if they are useful.

It's no secret that the communist movement suffered a big defeat when the pro capitalist forces won out in Russia and China. Some workers and students ask why a revolution led by ICWP won't turn out the same way. Some people even claim that history always repeats itself, so that our struggle must eventually fail.

If revolution were always part of a cycle that leads back to open capitalism, our fight for communism would be hopeless. But this certainly isn't true. This column and the next three will explain how we know when history does and when it does not repeat itself, and specifically how we know that the fact that socialism cannot lead to communism does not show that communism will fail too.

New Things Do Happen in History

We all know about things that have never happened before but stick around once they do occur. Inventions like the steam engine, cell phones, atomic weapons, etc., were made at a certain time and didn't need to be repeated.

The most important cases of things that are really new, however, are new social movements and systems. Capitalism began in the Middle Ages in Europe. Small manufacture and trade had existed in ancient Greece and Rome, but that wasn't capitalism, because it mainly used slave labor, not wage labor.

Capitalism first developed in individual towns and cities of Europe. It took a long struggle before capitalists could win state power in large countries, like England in the 1640s and in France in the 1790s.

Communism was also new in the early 19th century. Although ancient communist societies existed long ago and peasant communist movements existed in Germany in the 16th Century, a communist movement based on scientific economics and dialectics only began in the 1840s.

Repeating Patterns

Things that are truly new do happen, but there are also some kinds of events that occur over and over. Wars between capitalist rivals have existed as long as capitalism, and these wars grew into enormous slaughters in the 20th century. Capitalist economic crises repeat regularly: about every eight years since 1825.

Recognizing and recording patterns and regularities like these are vital parts of scientific knowledge in any field. But seeing patterns is only the first stage of knowledge. Noticing that capitalist crises keep happening does not explain why crises happen and does not tell us whether they must happen or could be stopped somehow.

But these issues are exactly what must be understood in order to know that capitalism can't be fixed, and how it can be destroyed. To fight to overthrow capitalism we must find and use what Marx called the "laws of motion" of capitalism, which he said was his ultimate aim in his work *Capital*.

The next column will describe the all-important laws of motion and how they differ from legislative laws.

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.” Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*

CAPITALISM CAN'T BE REFORMED TO MEET OUR NEEDS

In the last dialectics column we asked when truly new things happen in history and when patterns repeat. Some people claim that history always repeats itself so that our struggles for communism must end up like the failed revolutions in Russia and China. The rest of this series will show that, in fact, communist revolution not only can succeed, but represents the only way to meet our needs.

In this column we will discuss laws of motion. It is necessary to understand what Marx called the “laws of motion of capitalism” if we are to know why the evils of capitalism must repeat. Our task now must be to change these laws of motion by mobilizing the masses for communist revolution.

A key feature that distinguishes a law from a mere pattern is its necessity, constraint, or limitation. A law of nature exists when natural causes force things to happen according to a certain general pattern.

Things that are not compatible with the law are forced not to happen. Newton’s Second Law of Motion, for example, says that a thing that moves must change speed or direction at a rate that is proportional to the force that acts on it. No other pattern of motion is possible, that is, “allowed”

by nature.

A second feature of a law is universality: a law is a pattern that always happens or never happens in a specific system and under specific conditions. What always happens might be only a tendency or statistical average, like the law of capitalism that the price of something is proportional—on the average—to the amount of labor it takes to make it. In any case, a law is a regularity that can be relied on.

The concept of a law of nature is different from a piece of legislation, but these things do have something in common. The common element between laws of nature or economics and laws made up by a government is constraint or limitation.

If the capitalist government makes a law, they force people to obey it by threats of jail, fines or death, even if capitalists disobey the law themselves. In physics, natural causes force or constrain the behavior of objects.

There is, however, a basic difference between these two kinds of law. In a law of nature or economics, the constraint is not imposed from the outside (like the cops and courts), but results from internal causal factors.

The law of the falling rate of profit, for exam-

ple, guarantees falling profit rates unless certain kinds of counteracting factors are present. This is one of the laws of motion of the capitalist system, and it results from changes in the technology of production that are driven by competition between capitalists. Nothing outside the economic relations of capitalism makes this law work, and it does not apply to other economic systems.

Unlike legislation, economic and natural laws operate whether or not we can formulate them in a language. Marx wrote that the apparently accidental events that occur in economic competition are actually carried out and regulated by inner laws. These laws only become comprehensible when many events are considered together and carefully analyzed.

The reason that we must consider laws when we talk about repetition in history is because they tell us which patterns must repeat. There is no general law that history always repeats. For particular systems, however, there are laws that determine that history does repeat in specific ways, like the capitalist system’s law of motion that economic crises must happen over and over again.

The next column will deal with arguments against the existence of the laws of motion.

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.” Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*

BOSSSES DON'T WANT US TO LEARN REVOLUTION FROM HISTORY

We continue to explore the question, “Does history always repeat or are truly new things possible?” Last issue we discussed “Laws of Motion.” Laws are universal within a given system. They say that only certain outcomes are allowed and, ultimately, inevitable. For example, the laws of motion of capitalism determine that crisis must follow crisis in this system.

The bosses want to deny that laws of motion play any role in history. It puts their dictatorship at risk. Hence, they come up with bogus philosophical objections.

Many capitalist philosophers even claim that there are no real laws in nature. There are several variations on this line (called “constructivism,” “empiricism,” etc.), but they all represent idealism. They claim that what nature seems to dictate—what makes it seem that there are necessary constraints in natural processes—is really just something that human thought puts there. These idealists recognize patterns in nature, but claim

that the “must happen” character that a law requires is not really in nature itself, just in our minds.

Other capitalist philosophers claim that while there are laws of nature, there can be no laws of human history, but just a series of accidents. A famous example is the claim that Napoleon lost his empire because of his hemorrhoids. At the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon’s hemorrhoids hurt so much that he avoided riding his horse onto the battlefield and left some early decisions to his lieutenants, who made mistakes. Those mistakes lost the battle, so the story goes, and thus the empire. A scientific analysis of the battle is very different from this, however, emphasizing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the French Army and its opponents, and contingent factors such as the weather.

History is not fully determined by laws, and accidental or contingent causes sometimes play an important role. When fruit seller Mohamed

Bouazizi set himself on fire in January 2011, it triggered the revolt that overthrew Tunisian dictator Ben Ali and started the Arab Spring. Although oppression always provokes resistance, laws do not fully determine what form this resistance will take. Mr. Bouazizi’s action was contingent, that is, not determined by the laws of motion of politics in Tunisia.

If the “everything is an accident view” were true, however, it would mean that people could not make their own history, because they couldn’t learn or use laws of economics, politics or war to determine what must result from their actions or what is impossible for them to do.

Next issue we will discuss the laws of motion of socialism. These laws show that socialism must eventually return to open capitalism despite the best efforts of revolutionaries. That’s why we mobilize directly for communism.

CAN'T GET TO COMMUNISM THROUGH SOCIALISM

Marxism has become much more popular as the present capitalist crisis destroys the lives of billions. Lenin had it right: this system is a "horror without end."

In the past three columns, we examined how "capitalism's laws of motion" don't allow any other outcome. Some have mistakenly concluded that this means history must always repeat itself.

Part of the reason people are fooled by this stale idea is the failed strategy of fighting for socialism. But even in this historic failure lie the seeds of communist success.

For most of the history of Marxism, the communist movement has fought for socialism, hoping that it would be a stepping-stone to communism. But the socialist systems of the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe, all turned into open capitalism. These events were spread out over a number of years, and history repeated itself. Did this have to happen or could it have been avoided by "doing socialism right?"

We now realize that it is a law of motion of socialist systems that they eventually turn into open capitalism. The reason for this is that socialism is actually a form of capitalism in which the means of production are owned by the government. Thus socialism is subject to the laws of motion of capitalism, in particular, laws about money and the market.

Analysis of the operation of actual socialist systems shows that their wage systems, inequalities and state organization lead to the rapid rise of a new capitalist ruling class, which takes over the government and the former communist party. The political power of the working class (when

that power actually exists) can't be maintained against the capitalist institutions of socialism. The new capitalist classes of different socialist countries even fight wars with each other, like the USSR-China war in 1969, and the Vietnam-China war in 1979.

Once a new ruling class is firmly in control, socialism is no longer the best way for it to rule, and open capitalism eventually returns. The result is that if communists were to try to create socialism again, history would certainly repeat itself. There is no way to "do socialism right."

No New Ruling Class Under Communism

A central problem that faces our new communist movement is how to make sure that communism can be achieved and continue, so that a new ruling class can never arise and restore capitalism. Analyzing the reasons why socialism can't lead to communism is critical for understanding how to do this.

A major source of the new ruling class that was created under socialism was the high income and special privileges that the top party and government leaders had. Thus we cannot allow privileges for anyone.

This means we cannot have a wage system, either, since wages always mean that some get much more than others. Wages also undermine communist politics by providing a material basis for racist, sexist, and elitist ideas.

Knowledge of the specific features of socialism that prevented it from reaching communism is fundamental to our strategy for fighting for communism now. Mobilizing the masses for communism is the program for creating and

keeping communism that specifically rejects the socialist ideas and practices that led to working class defeat. This knowledge shows us the way forward to communism.

In the next column, we outline specific communist answers to three other examples of the failed socialist strategy.



ICWP has published our manifesto *Mobilize the Masses for Communism*. It's available in English and Spanish. Order your copy or copies. Please send donations for the costs of printing and mailing. We also ask for your suggestions and criticisms.

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3175 S. Hoover St.,
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HARD-FOUGHT LESSONS TEACH US HOW TO WIN & KEEP COMMUNISM

During this year's summer projects our Party met thousands of young (and older) workers, students and soldiers who hate capitalism. Most want to know what went wrong with the old communist movement before they dedicate themselves to a new revolutionary struggle. That seems reasonable.

We often saw reformists fail to convince these potential new recruits that capitalism has a chance. Eventually, every one of these reformers resorted to the same old bait:

"You got no choice but to try and make this system work because that's all there is," they whine. "Communism hasn't worked."

As we started to discuss in the last article, it is socialism that failed, not communism. In fact, knowledge of the specific features of socialism that prevented it from reaching communism is key to confidence that we will succeed. We continue this discussion.

The old movement thought socialism would be a halfway house to communism. That didn't happen because socialism still follows the basic "laws of motion" of capitalism, particularly laws about money and the market.

It preserves not only money and markets, but also trade in commodities, the wage system and private appropriation of wealth. History has shown that this leads to destructive conflicts even in societies with no classes.

The indigenous peoples of North America

fought an endless series of wars over resources and trade routes even before Europeans arrived. But communist mass mobilization of production and distribution, aimed at meeting needs of the workers, will give us the means to overcome inequalities and prevent conflicts between different regions of the world.

We will need a standing army after the revolution. We can expect every capitalist power in the world to attack any new communist beachhead.

The development of a new capitalist class is inevitable under socialism. The old bourgeoisie-style armed forces can defeat workers' struggles against the new capitalists, as happened in the Cultural Revolution in China. Hence there must be no armed force separate from the masses under communism.

Mass communist political consciousness (that is, understanding of and agreement with communism by most people) is a critical factor in winning and keeping communism.

It is certainly not enough, however. Socialism in China used the idea that the party and the government should be "supervised by the masses." This meant that the masses were supposed to keep the Party and government honest by protesting when these institutions did not serve them.

Mass struggles in China showed, however, that the masses could never "supervise" from the outside. Only the actual participation by masses

of people who are committed to communism and led by the Party can do this. Only mass participation inside all institutions of communist society can prevent those institutions from being turned against the working class.

This means that communism cannot succeed if the masses of workers don't participate. We can't "elect" or "appoint" a representative who will fight for our needs in some stuffy parliamentary body miles away in a huge stone building.

The job of the Party is to organize debate, discussion and action at every level of our society. Facts and results of practice will be available for all. We will have honest criticism and self-criticism. That's how the international working class can rule.

Knowledge of specific features of socialism that prevented it from reaching communism is fundamental to our strategy for fighting for communism now. Mobilizing the masses for communism is the program for creating and keeping communism that specifically rejects the socialist ideas and practices that led to working class defeat. This knowledge shows us the way forward to communism.

Our final article will discuss what we know and what we don't know about the laws of motion of communism. The sacrifices of millions to build this movement were not in vain. We learned a good bit about how to make communism succeed.

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WHAT WE KNOW NOW AND WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT COMMUNISM

This article concludes our series on why communism can win. It is, however, not the last word.

We began by listing new things that happen in history: from inventions to new social movements and systems. Slavery, feudalism and capitalism were new developments in history. The communist movement based on scientific economics and dialectical materialism originated around 1840.

Although truly new things happen, some events occur over and over. Wars between capitalist rivals and economic crises have existed as long as capitalism has.

Noting that these patterns repeat is not the same as knowing why or whether they must happen. The “laws of motion” of capitalism answer these two questions.

A law is different than a mere pattern. A law of nature exists when natural causes force things to happen according to a general pattern. Things that are not compatible with the law are forced not to happen.

A law is universal. It occurs in a specific system or under specific conditions, a pattern that must occur or can't occur.

A natural law is different from legislation. In a law of nature or economics, the constraint is not imposed from the outside like the cops or the courts. The constraint results from internal causal factors.

The “laws of motion” of capitalism are still primary in socialism, especially laws about money and the market. These laws won't allow us to “do socialism right.” Despite the best intentions of past revolutionaries, socialism could never evolve into communism and had to revert back to open capitalism.

Knowing the specific features of socialism that prevented it from reaching communism is fundamental to our strategy for fighting for communism now. *Mobilize the Masses for Communism* is a program for creating and keeping communism

that specifically rejects socialist ideas and practices that led to working class defeat.

We published *Mobilize the Masses for Communism* a year ago. We've already run through three editions and over 20,000 copies, not to mention web hits. Comrades around the world have asked for more translations other than the original two: Spanish and English. As you read and discuss the conclusion to this series, keep in mind that we have to raise funds to print more and we need translators.

All knowledge is ultimately derived from practice. Since communism has never existed under modern conditions, there is a lot about it that we don't know yet, knowledge that has to be derived from future practice.

We can already identify some laws of motion of communist society, however. We know that communism is impossible without the mobilization of the masses for communism, and that the laws of materialist dialectics apply to all systems.

Generally speaking, however, communism will not have the severely restrictive laws of motion that capitalism and socialism do. In particular society will no longer be limited by the need to maximize profits or base planning on money.

Marx and Engels argued that under communism the “realm of freedom”--that is, the areas of social life where people can collectively choose what they want to do--will expand, and the “realm of necessity” governed by laws of motion will be much smaller.

Our movement is bound to run into things we don't expect now. But the practice of millions of workers and peasants who have already fought for communism, like the Chinese Red Army, the People's Commune movement and the Cultural Revolution in China in the 40s, 50s and 60s, provides a wealth of information about communism as a mass phenomenon. (Read, “The Great Revolutions Teach Us How to Win” in *Mobilize the*

Masses for Communism) We stand on the shoulders of giants.

Beyond this, long experience of the communist movement shows the enormous capacity of the working class for creativity, determination and self-sacrifice--experience that tells us the amazing things that workers can accomplish. Knowledge of these capacities of the working class is a key reason for our confidence that the working class can win communism and keep it by communist mass mobilization, now that we are finally on the right road. Join us in creating this momentous new stage of history.



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