

Socialism for Our Grandchildren?

We continue publication today of comment on Nikita Khrushchev's TV prediction that our grandchildren would see socialism, and on the various reactions to the remark.

We hope our readers will send us letters on the discussion around the Khrushchev remark, as on the articles which we are publishing.

GRANDFATHERS AND GRANDCHILDREN

By JOSEPH CLARK

IT SEEMS TO ME that predicting our grandchildren will, or will not live under socialism, can be quite pointless. For socialists in the West it should be a sobering thought that in our great-grandfather's time Karl Marx thought he would live under socialism.



The problem is, why, 109 years after the Communist Manifesto appeared, socialism is not today the prevailing system in Western Europe and the U. S. To study that may help us clear the way for our grandchildren, so they may live under a system free from the exploitation of man by man, and in which political democracy and individual freedom are matched by economic democracy for all.

As long as our economic destinies are controlled by a "power elite," our political and civil liberties are automatically limited. There was more of an economic basis for the Bill of Rights in Jefferson's time when most Americans owned property in the means of production (farms), than today, when giant corporations are in such a dominating position.

IT IS A TRIBUTE to V. I. Lenin that he saw the possibility of moving the socialist fulcrum from Berlin, Paris and London to Petrograd, Peking and Bombay. Lenin was a great Marxist because he refused to be bound by dogma. He realized that the very essence of Marxism is change. He knew that in his epoch the capitalist world was different from that of Marx's time. He, therefore altered the old concepts of socialist development. He led the first successful socialist revolution and all of history is changed thereby.

But Lenin was as wrong as Marx when it came to predictions about socialism in the West. It wasn't even as a prediction, but as a description of the actual situation he thought existed, that Lenin told the opening congress of the Communist International, in 1919:

"The Soviet system has conquered not only in backward Russia but also in the most developed country of Europe—Germany, and in the oldest capitalist country—Great Britain."

How wrong it would be to judge Marx and Lenin by their erroneous predictions. But how wrong it is, too, for Marxists to adopt all of Marx's and Lenin's

conclusions as dogma even when 100 years of history refute them. It is the method of Karl Marx—not his conclusions—which is immortal.

Marx enabled social scientists to understand more fully the changes in nature and society and promote further change. But, unfortunately, he couched his brilliant dissection of capitalism and his discoveries as "laws" instead of tendencies. Since he was dealing with social science, not physical science, with people, and above all with classes and the class struggle, this could and did lead to misconceptions.

SOCIALISM in the West is not arising out of a process whereby an extreme of plenty at one pole is set off by a pole of increasing misery and impoverishment. The class struggle prevented that tendency of capitalist development from coming to fruition.

There has been 109 years of class struggle in Western Europe and in the U.S. since the Communist Manifesto. Could this century of more of struggle leave the world as it was? Obviously not.

The American worker, for example, has made enormous advances since the days of Karl Marx. He won things Marx could hardly have thought possible under capitalism. But capitalism itself has changed as a result of these struggles.

Furthermore, the overthrow of capitalism in one-third of the world has altered the geography of capitalism. And along with those two factors there has been the objective development which Marx and Engels described so brilliantly the constant socialization of production on the technical side together with ever-growing productivity. That objective process, taken with the results of the other two—the continuing class struggle and the socialist revolutions in Russia, China,

Yugoslavia and Poland—form the basis for new types of socialist development.

THOUGH THE "power elite" dominates our country, they are no longer able to ride roughshod and rule completely as they did before the 30's. The struggles of American working people changed things—in respect to welfare, social legislation, the power of the trade unions, the influence and responsibility of government in economic activities.

Out of the past history of the American class struggle and even more out of its future history should come a socialist development far different from anything Marx or Lenin imagined.

Of one thing we can be certain—American socialism will bear precious little resemblance to socialism as it evolved in Russia or in China. The only common denominator will be public control of the means of production. Americans will face the problem Lenin wrestled with, but under altogether different conditions. Lenin saw how bureaucracy was deforming the workers state. Lenin warned against Stalin's efforts to concentrate power in his hands and to misuse it.

Socialism in our country will benefit from the sad experience elsewhere in the struggle against bureaucracy and the brutal misuse of power. Capitalism, of course, has never afforded the ordinary worker and farmer direct control of his conditions in making a living. While socialism has eliminated capitalist control, it has thus far failed to devise a method of direct workers' control of production.

In this respect the fine traditions of Jeffersonian democracy will play an indispensable part in the birth of an American socialism. And who knows what our grandchildren, or their children will even call it?

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