

# Notes Toward an Analysis of the Soviet Bourgeoisie

by Lenny Wolff and Aaron Davis

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If the Soviet Union is capitalist, then where is the bourgeoisie? The defenders of the Soviet Union constantly return to this question, and use it to argue the nonexistence of any Soviet bourgeois class. Their line of argument proceeds along two interrelated tracks.

First, they claim that the “logic” of the socialist mode of production—by which they essentially mean state ownership of the means of production—rules out the generation within socialist society of either bourgeois relations or a bourgeoisie. Thus the restoration of capitalism is rendered logically impossible, short of an invasion by imperialists or a counterrevolution by dispossessed exploiters. Second, they list characteristics that are said to typify a capitalist class and then point to the alleged absence of any such phenomena in the Soviet Union to deduce the nonexistence of a Soviet bourgeoisie.

While the question of the function and shape of the Soviet bourgeoisie is secondary to the crucial determinant of Soviet society—the dominance of the law of value—there is some point to examining the arguments marshaled by the revisionists to prove their case. In doing this we, too, will proceed along two tracks: (1) we will take up and refute in turn the assertions by the revisionist apologists concerning constraints on luxury consumption, equality of income, working-class control of the state, the lack of a mechanism for reproduction of a specifically capitalist ruling class, and the role of managers in the Soviet Union; (2) we will analyze and critique the anti-Marxist underpinnings of their entire argument, including their premises regarding the state, the defining characteristics of social classes, and the “logic” of the socialist mode of production.

As a point of departure, we take the following passage from the introduction to the reprinting of “The ‘Tarnished Socialism’ Thesis” by the RCP:

“Capitalism does not reside in any single legal property relation between individual men and the means of production. In the real world it consists of a network of relations between social classes,

relations which have a material foundation in commodity production, in the differences between mental and manual labor, town and country, etc., and which are expressed through the complex, dialectical interaction between base and superstructure. Thus, there is no form or structure which, by dint of its 'innate characteristics,' is impervious to capitalism."<sup>1</sup>

While there is no rigid linkage between certain structural forms and a specific class content, capital must nevertheless generate the forms, in both base and superstructure, that *are* appropriate to its reproduction. These forms have definite implications for the international practice of the state, the scope of the law of value in social reproduction, the relations between leaders and led, etc. In that sense, we hope both to shed light on how the institutions and practices, of Soviet society serve the reproduction of capitalist social relations and to indicate further lines of research on this question.

## I. Who Is the Bourgeoisie in the Epoch of Imperialism?

The Maoist argument, says David Laibman, must demonstrate three things to prove the Soviet Union capitalist: the sources of the power of capital, the existence of a ruling class, and the operation of capitalist laws of motion.<sup>2</sup> We have no quarrel with Laibman's demands per se, and all of them in our opinion can be (and have been) proven. We do disagree with his definition of terms, his mix of a pre-imperialist model of capitalism with a bourgeois-sociological approach to classes. For Marxism, the bourgeoisie is the personification of bourgeois production relations; thus it's of first importance to correctly understand the character of these production relations today, in the era of imperialism.

But Laibman's sketch of the operation of capital tends to plant at least a foot and several toes back in the nineteenth century. He writes:

"Of utmost importance in establishing the existence of capital is the *valorization*, not only of the separate means of production, but also of the enterprise itself. This would mean that a sum of value functions as capital; i.e., is embodied in the enterprise but is independent of it and is therefore transferable from enterprise to enterprise. Thus, enterprises, together with their physical equipment or separably, can be bought and sold. This valorization of the means of production presupposes fragmentation or dispersion of ownership. The objectivity of values arising out of impersonal forces independent of human agency requires uncoordinated, simultaneous micro-decisions and aggregates which are unknown before the fact, indeed, the secrecy and duplication of information-gathering systems characteristic of unplanned, competitive accumulation. The quest for profit at the micro level must be shown to determine the composition of output rates of growth, the path of technical change, and the distribution of income. Moreover, profits accruing to enterprises must appear as the result of a spontaneous struggle, not as the outcome of socially planned activity. Thus, the prices which govern profitability must form spontaneously."<sup>3</sup>

Here Laibman obscures the transition emphasized by Lenin in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*: the emergence of monopoly, resulting in the immense socialization not only of production but

technical invention and ownership as well.<sup>\*4</sup> The entire second half of Laibman's description basically does not apply to the practice and character of the predominant form of capital under imperialism, which is finance capital. "The quest for profit at the micro level" yields in imperialism to the financial strategies of huge blocks of capital, in which individual enterprises may well be drained and left to stagnate, or else artificially pumped up, depending on the larger interests of the financial group controlling them. Elsewhere, Albert Szymanski and Laibman each try to pose the runaway shop as almost the quintessence of private ownership—but even these runaways are not generally based on decisions at the "micro level" but flow out of economic strategies developed and pursued by the financial group. The point is that in the era of imperialism this more social ownership regulates the flow of capital through many different and variegated channels.

Similarly, the dominance of monopoly and the role of the imperialist state seriously affect price determination: measures like cartel-pricing (to share out profits), government-mandated price controls (to influence the allocation of resources), or the sort of orderly marketing agreements witnessed today within the Western bloc (to lessen the impact of predatory price wars) all contain elements of "social planning" that were either unknown or exceptional before the late nineteenth century. It is impossible to come to grips with such phenomena as the "composition of output rates of growth, the path of technical change, and the distribution of income" outside of an understanding of monopoly coordination and state intervention in the reproductive process.

Does this suggest then that capitalism rationally coordinates production and "macro-plans" in such a way as to overcome crisis? On the contrary. The law of value impinges upon and—through the force of anarchy—determines the outcome of capitalist planning at all levels. Indeed Laibman's schema not only negates the higher forms of organization of imperialism, but also covers over the *heightened anarchy those higher forms generate*. In the stage of imperialism, capital accumulates internationally but remains nationally rooted. As such not only do the contradictions of accumulation lead to unprecedented global

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\* Lenin's description in *Imperialism* is worth citing at length:

"This is something quite different from the old free competition between manufacturers, scattered and out of touch with one another, and producing for an unknown market. Concentration has reached the point at which it is possible to make an approximate estimate of all sources of raw materials (for example, the iron ore deposits) of a country and even, as we shall see, of several countries, or of the whole world. Not only are such estimates made, but these sources are captured by gigantic monopolist associations. An approximate estimate of the capacity of markets is also made, and the associations 'divide' them up amongst themselves by agreement. Skilled labor is monopolized, the best engineers are engaged; the means of transport are captured.... Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads directly to the most comprehensive socialization of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order, a transitional one from complete free competition to complete socialization.

Production becomes social, but appropriation remains private. The social means of production remain the private property of a few. The general framework of formally recognized free competition remains, and the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times heavier, more burdensome and intolerable." [Note 4: V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Collected Works (LCW)*, Volume 22 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), p. 205.]

crisis, but they also give rise to international rivalry among contending imperialist powers over the division of the world, which sets the framework for international accumulation. This rivalry has periodically erupted into interimperialist war, and it is in this that the contradiction between the unprecedented degree of organization and the greatly heightened anarchy characteristic of modern capital finds its concentrated expression.<sup>\*5, 6, 7</sup>

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\* In fact, the trend toward more social forms of private ownership was noted by Marx and Engels, as well as Lenin; the concept is hardly foreign to Marxism, and it is perhaps a bit disingenuous for those claiming to argue in the Marxist tradition to evade it. Marx noted in *Capital* how direct personal private property in the means of production in the form of individual proprietorships or partnerships was beginning to break down with the rise of stock companies (modern corporations) and the expansion of the credit system:

“The capital ... is here directly endowed with the form of social capital (capital of directly associated individuals) as distinct from private capital, and its undertakings assume the form of social undertakings as distinct from private undertakings. *It is the abolition of capital as private property within the framework of capitalist production itself...*

“Aside from the stock-company business... credit offers to the individual capitalist, or to one who is regarded a capitalist, absolute control within certain limits *over* the capital and property of others.... *The control over social capital, not the individual capital of his own, gives him control of social labor*” (emphasis added). [Note 5.]

In the Soviet Union today we see a highly developed, highly mystified form of control over social capital, not individual capital of one’s own, giving control over social labor.

Engels projects the further development of this trend in a passage of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. This speaks in particular to Laibman’s related contention on the impossibility of state capitalism:

“If the crises revealed the bourgeoisie's incapacity to continue to administer the modern productive forces, the conversion of the large production and communication establishments into joint-stock companies, trusts and state property shows that the bourgeoisie can be dispensed with for this purpose....

“But neither conversion into joint-stock companies and trusts nor conversion into state property deprives the productive forces of their character as capital. This is obvious in the case of joint-stock companies and trusts. But the modern state, too, is only the organization with which bourgeois society provides itself in order to maintain the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against encroachments either by the workers or by individual capitalists. The modern state, whatever its form, is an essentially capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal aggregate capitalist. The more productive forces it takes over into its possession, the more it becomes a real aggregate capitalist, the more citizens it exploits.” [Note 6.]

The weakness in Engels’ formulation here lies in the fact that “the ideal aggregate capitalist” may be interpreted (and has been by some) to mean that the state is actually a single, unitary capitalist. There is, in fact, real contention between discrete blocs of capital within the formal unitary state form of the Soviet Union, even as the state in the main land simultaneously represents the national capital as a whole. Especially in conditions where the state itself is both political representative and major owner this becomes extremely complex, and is an expression of the contradiction between the anarchy of production generally, and the interlinked trend toward ever greater organization. [Note 7.]

The import for the argument at hand is this: to hinge the concept of private appropriation to one very specific (and no longer dominant) organizational form of capital leads away from an understanding of contemporary social relations, and into a misidentification of the bourgeoisie.\* Modern forms of ownership themselves are highly socialized; appropriation principally goes on at the level of the financial group (rather than the individual enterprise); state intervention (including direct state ownership and constraints on the juridically private sector) is typical. It is such relations which the imperialist bourgeoisie personifies.

### **To Which Class Does Robert McNamara Belong?**

In this light, we turn to Albert Szymanski's surprising digression at the New York City debate with Raymond Lotta on the class position of Robert McNamara.

“If capitalists in the West can hire managers,” Szymanski stated, “does the fact that McNamara was president of Ford Motor Company make him part of the ruling class? No, the Ford family can *hire* McNamara. So in the U.S. there's no confusion that being a manager does not make you part of the capitalist class. So it's completely possible the working class can hire a manager”<sup>8</sup>—presumably even McNamara himself, were the right opening to present itself. Indeed, if Szymanski means to say that the top leaders of the Soviet Union find their American analog in Robert McNamara, we'd like to thank him for an interesting and rather useful way to get a handle on the class character of the Soviet rulers.

McNamara, remember, was no mere plant manager, but president of one of the ten largest corporations in the U.S. From there he went on to serve nearly two full terms as Secretary of Defense, and afterward headed up the World Bank. What kind of class analysis can maintain this man is part of the managerial stratum, and not a member of the bourgeoisie?<sup>†9</sup>

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\* While Laibman holds that state monopoly capitalism can only relate to institutions like the post office within a social formation overwhelmingly characterized by juridically private ownership, and cannot possibly describe any conceivable social formation as a whole, other revisionist theoreticians—and the CPUSA itself—routinely use the term to denote an alleged emergence of close personal ties between the monopolies and the members of the state apparatus. Ostensibly this signals a “tighter grip” by the “ultra-right” bourgeoisie on the state apparatus; the converse—that the election of candidates deemed by the CPUSA to be free of open ties to the monopolies represents a step toward socialism—provides part of the theoretical fig leaf for the CP's maneuverings within the Democratic Party.

† For one thing it's an analysis that narrows down the bourgeoisie to the “sixteen families” popularized a few years back—that is, only the very wealthiest dominant families of the key financial blocs really qualify as members of the bourgeoisie. While the Fords, Rockefellers, du Ponts, Kennedys, etc., may stand near the apex of the bourgeoisie, the class itself (in the U.S.) is by no means numerically insignificant. The “handful of families” analysis at minimum seriously downplays the necessity for armed struggle and civil war in the imperialist countries, and has served the revisionist parties as an argument for the viability of their “antimonopoly coalition” programme. [Note 9.]

Robert McNamara was a more significant personification of imperialist production relations than were the vast majority of capitalists who hold controlling interests in any number of small or medium-size firms, even if his private fortune might not come close to theirs. McNamara has exercised tremendous power in his various and sundry positions *to allocate means of production as capital and to appropriate surplus value*, which is the essence of capital.

True, McNamara's role is complex, and not cut-and-dried. When he ran the Defense Department—and he did not run it in the interests of the Ford family!—his responsibilities did not entail the direct manipulation of capital; he was dealing on the different and higher plane of politics, and represented the interests of the *national capital*, of the bourgeoisie overall.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between politics and economics becomes yet more entangled in considering his stewardship of the World Bank; here, while also principally representing the bourgeoisie as a whole, he did so specifically in the function of creating favorable conditions for the flow of capital into the Third World, supervising the lending of billions of dollars and imposing highly restrictive conditions on the borrowers. In this case he represented the interests of Western-bloc capital as a whole in its rivalry with the Soviet Union, and in its attempts to more thoroughly penetrate and plunder (and secure) the Third World. Through it all, however, McNamara is a modern bourgeois *par excellence*, and we again thank Mr. Szymanski for his assurance that the Soviet rulers—i.e., the Soviet state- monopoly capitalist class—are quite comparable to this criminal!

Laibman and Szymanski posit as criteria for the nonexistence of a Soviet bourgeoisie the organizational props and methods of control of pre-monopoly capitalism. It is not too difficult to show that these do not apply to the Soviet Union. But precisely because they have set up straw men, we haven't learned anything about the question at hand. What must be studied are the characteristic modes of operation of finance capital and the specific institutional (and historically conditioned) forms it assumes in the Soviet Union.

## II. Revisionist Proofs and Pluralist Paradigms

When Laibman and Szymanski take up the study of the Soviet class formation and its reproduction, they fall back almost entirely on the approach of bourgeois sociology. They identify epiphenomena like income, net worth, and family standing as the key determinants of class position. This whole approach arose in opposition to (and continues to oppose) the Marxist focus on the essential question: the relationship of the individual (as a member of a social group) to the means of production. Thus Szymanski sets up his argument as follows:

“(1) [T]here is no wealthy class [in the Soviet Union] which has a living standard or wealth remotely comparable to that of the economic elite of the capitalist countries; (2) the top positions in Soviet society, unlike as in capitalist societies, are largely filled by people of common origins; (3) no privileged elite social stratum exists with its own highly distinctive life style, exclusive intermarriage patterns and virtual certainty of passing on its positions to its children, as is the case in the capitalist countries; and (4) the differences in income, life style and passing on of privileges to children is very much like the differences between the working class and the professional middle class in the U.S., indicating that those in ‘power elite’ positions in the USSR are much

more like middle managers and professionals in the West than they are like an owning or ruling class. In sum there is no evidence that a ‘state bourgeoisie’ exists in the USSR.”<sup>11</sup>

In a similar vein, Laibman demands that the Maoists identify

“a stable elite with a distinct upper-class lifestyle as a base for informal communication and differential socialization. A partial list of ingredients: qualitatively significant income differentials, where the differentials are linked to positions of authority in the political-administrative structure; the ability to acquire equity control over natural and produced resources by investing this income; residential segregation; differential access to education; evidence of significant intermarriage among the elite; evidence that most positions of authority in the political-administrative hierarchy are occupied by people who have had elite socialization, i.e., of non-working-class backgrounds.”<sup>12</sup>

None of Szymanski’s points speak to the essence of the bourgeoisie—its ability to allocate means of production as capital, for the purpose of the self-expansion of value. Laibman at least mentions something resembling this in one of his prerequisites of a bourgeoisie—“the ability to acquire equity control over natural and produced resources by investing this income”—but hinges it again on the *private* (in this case clearly meaning “individual” or juridically private) investment of income, which is not, as has been noted, essential to the capital relation, especially during the era of imperialism.

Despite all that, by thoroughly addressing the four main arguments advanced by Szymanski, and by directly answering Laibman’s challenge on its own terms, more can be learned about the class structure of the Soviet Union.

### **Distribution, Luxury Consumption, and Stratification**

Distribution forms a secondary aspect of the relations of production; Marx’s point in *Critique of the Gotha Programme* indicates what’s wrong in Szymanski’s lopsided emphasis on this aspect:

“Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself. The capitalist mode of production, for example, rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of nonworkers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power. If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present-day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically. If the material conditions of production are the cooperative property of the workers themselves, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one. Vulgar socialism (and from it in turn a section of the democracy) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution. After the real relation has long been made clear, why retrogress again?”<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the clear (if secondary) corollary of the above passage is that the actual distribution in a capitalist society corresponds to a specifically capitalist ownership of the means of production. And this is in fact the case in the Soviet Union.

Again, as we have stressed, it is not privileged consumption but production as production of capital, as self-expanding value, that essentially characterizes capitalist appropriation. Marx observes in Volume I of *Capital*:

“At the historical dawn of capitalist production—and every capitalist upstart has personally to go through this historical stage—avarice, and desire to get rich, are the ruling passions....

“Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!”

But there is, after all, a social role for luxury consumption. Marx notes that, “When a certain stage of development has been reached, a conventional degree of prodigality, which is also an exhibition of wealth, and consequently a source of credit, becomes a business necessity to the ‘unfortunate’ capitalist. Luxury enters into capital’s expenses of representation.” Further, with the growth of accumulation, the possibility of expanding the capitalists’ sphere of personal enjoyments without unduly restricting accumulation arises. Often, then, there arises a “conflict between the passion for accumulation”—the essential characteristic of a capitalist—“and the desire for enjoyment.”

“Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast;  
The one is ever parting from the other.”<sup>14</sup>

We address the issue, then, of the relative strength of these two souls in the breast of the Soviet bourgeoisie.

The largest obstacle in developing a precise characterization of the Soviet ruling class in this regard (and in relation to a number of other questions as well) is the fact that the Soviets publish absolutely no income statistics or pay scales applicable to any strata above the level of enterprise managers and professionals, and Soviet sociologists systematically exclude these strata from study.<sup>15</sup> The upper levels of the party/economic/state hierarchy that constitute the Soviet state-monopoly class are prohibited as an object of (at least published) investigation in the Soviet Union.

We must therefore inevitably rely primarily on Western bourgeois studies—an admittedly biased source. As a check on this bias (since pro-Soviet analysts themselves must inevitably rely upon Western sources as well), we will contrast our own treatment with Albert Szymanski’s, focusing here on his books published before the Soviet debate. Szymanski has made the most ambitious attempt to prove that the rulers of the Soviet Union do not indulge in significant privileged luxury consumption. Finally, we will note the confirmation of the essentials of our factual account by pro-Soviet sources.

As noted earlier, appropriation of surplus value and its reinvestment by the Soviet state-monopoly capitalist class takes place overwhelmingly through control over state appropriation and investment. Private incomes of the ruling class do not in the main enter into the accumulation of capital but represent



part of that portion of surplus value appropriated as revenue for the personal consumption of the state-monopoly capitalist class.

The personal incomes of members of the state-monopoly capitalist class, to the extent that there is any information available, are significantly higher than those of workers or managers, but do not appear to be spectacular. Szymanski, however, understates their level from the available sources. The one documented figure in his book and article that bears on the issue of ruling class incomes, as opposed to those of managers or professionals, is a single reference to a “top government official” earning 600 rubles, made in passing in Mervyn Matthews’ book, *Class and Society in Soviet Russia*. In a subsequent book, *Privilege in the Soviet Union* (perhaps the most comprehensive bourgeois academic account currently available on the subject), Matthews clarifies this matter. Income figures are based on data gleaned from personal interviews. The 600 ruble figure is the reported basic income of the First Secretary of the Tula Oblast, as well as that of the First Secretary of a small republic.<sup>16</sup> They are also eligible for an additional bonus of 210 rubles. Yet such people are hardly the top of the Soviet hierarchy. Unfortunately, the only substantiated figure Matthews has for higher officials is that for a Marshal of the USSR with a total reported monetary income of 2000 rubles a month.<sup>17</sup>

But especially near the top of the hierarchy, where the Soviet ruling class is concentrated, monetary income is not the main source of privileged luxury consumption. The greatest part of the privileged consumption is provided for directly by the state or other institutions.<sup>18</sup> Such privileged consumption, as Bob Avakian has pointed out, is “consumption of things which are ‘socially’ owned—collectively owned by the ruling revisionist bourgeoisie. This certainly does not prevent them from being ‘private’ in the sense that they are the private preserve of a class, the part of the privately appropriated surplus value (appropriated by the Soviet bourgeoisie from the exploitation of the proletariat in the Soviet Union as well as exploitation and plunder internationally) that is spent on personal (overwhelmingly luxury) consumption by that class (as opposed to the much larger part that is reinvested).”<sup>19</sup>

While institutionally provided “expense accounts” and a broad array of other “perks” are quite common in the West, this phenomenon of the *bulk* of ruling class luxury consumption taking a “socially” organized form is definitely a peculiarity of the revisionist bourgeoisie. This arises, first, out of the historical legacy and current “socialist” cover of the Soviet bourgeoisie, and the consequent political need to disguise the extent of the appropriation of surplus value for the purposes of luxury consumption. (The prohibition of published studies of the Soviet ruling class fills a similar function.)

There are also reasons more tied up with the actual operation of the Soviet economy. Shortages of consumer goods—due to a combination of low prices for the goods that are available, an extremely poor system of distribution, and the lopsided development of the Soviet economy in regard to agriculture and light industry—are so prevalent that monetary income is seldom a guarantee of the ability to consume. This is particularly the case with luxury goods which, as a general rule, are not broadly available, but it extends even to everyday necessities. For instance, in 1979 the Central Committee itself noted “interruptions in trading” of medicine, soap, laundry soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, needles, thread, diapers, and other light industry commodities.<sup>20</sup> The shortage in luxury goods for individual consumption in particular flows out of a mixed set of constraints: to effect the sort of shift in the Soviet productive base to make luxury production broadly accessible for individual consumption would both strain the economy

and exacerbate the political effect of the extensive shortages in basic goods at a time when tremendous priority is being given to—and sacrifice on the part of the masses being demanded for—military production.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, it is helpful to recall Marx's comment that luxury enters into the capitalist's costs of representation. To the extent that the investment of personal wealth still plays a significant role in the West, luxury born of personal monetary expenditures is a sign of "prosperity" and hence of advantage in promoting common business dealings, securing credit, etc. In the Soviet Union, it is not personal income, but one's position in the hierarchy that is the decisive factor in securing control over a portion of social capital. Position and status in the hierarchy are of importance in securing credit, arranging various deals, etc., which continue to be of important concern to Soviet capitalists.<sup>22</sup> Luxury consumption hence takes a form emphasizing one's control over social capital.

Luxury consumption also plays a significant part in building a social base through rewards. This is actually what Szymanski is dealing with in his focus on the luxury consumption of managers and professionals. But while significant, this form is not the most important manifestation of luxury consumption, which instead takes place in the top echelon of the Soviet bourgeoisie. Where Szymanski does touch on the privileges of the ruling class, he is generally simply wrong. For instance, he asserts that "there is no tendency for there to be a high concentration of privilege" in housing, among other things, and cites as "proof" a book which *actually* says, "The housing preserves of Soviet political leaders are too well known to require comment, beginning, for example, with the estates in the Kuntsevo region of Moscow."<sup>23</sup>

The limousines, country dachas, sanatoria and resorts reserved for the revisionist bourgeoisie and their faithful hangers-on are also too well known to require comment.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, an entire department of the Central Committee, the "Administration of Affairs," oversees the expenditure of a secret budget to maintain a network of choice apartments, dachas, guest houses, rest homes, cars, and servants for the party elite.

There is a threefold system of special stores and shopping privileges for the Soviet bourgeoisie and their more privileged functionaries. One is the well-advertised *beryoza* hard-currency shops where Western and superior Soviet goods are sold. The normal Soviet citizen is barred from these shops, but the privileged can buy there, using special certificate rubles (worth eight times their face value on the black market). The second is a network of quality, restricted access, subsidized cafeterias and restricted outlets for home delivery from larger stores and buffets. Finally, there are the well-known closed "special stores" offering quality goods at often nominal prices to a select clientele. Some 100 such stores have been identified in Moscow alone, including specialty shops such as tailors, book dealers, hairdressers, launderers, cleaners, picture hangers, etc. Hedrik Smith tells the story of a Soviet journalist—herself among the more well-to-do sections of Soviet society—who, after being smuggled into one of these special stores by an acquaintance, emerged with eyes big with wonder and announced to her husband: "For *them*, communism has arrived."

A network of special production units exist to serve this restricted distribution system. For instance, special dairy herds are known to be kept in agricultural enterprises near Moscow, and the Mikoyan Meat Processing Combine is said to have a separate production unit for high-quality meat.

Other privileges for the upper levels of the hierarchy include a special closed system of hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries widely known as the “Fourth Directorate” of the Ministry of Health; provision of servants and maids; special delivery and cleaning services; retirement pensions above the nominal “maximum”; and even special ticket offices and reservations for cultural events.

It is true that even in a genuinely socialist country certain relative privileges for leading persons are necessary (for instance, expenses for visits of diplomatic personnel and dignitaries, etc.), and that more generally the continued existence of the division of labor and inequalities among the people, along with commodities, money, etc., provide a significant pull upon the more privileged sections of the population to attempt to “live it up.” This itself is a manifestation of the profoundly contradictory character of genuinely socialist societies as the transition to classless society—a contradictory character which the revisionists fundamentally deny.

It is also true that during the socialist Stalin period, from the late 1930s on, privileged consumption went beyond what was objectively necessary—and this was, in fact, one factor strengthening the position of the new bourgeoisie arising within the Communist Party itself that seized power after Stalin’s death. But it is the predominance of the law of value, not simply the existence of privileged consumption as such, that essentially distinguishes capitalism from socialism—and modern-day Soviet social-imperialism from Soviet socialism under Stalin.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, the degree and the actual social and political significance of relative privilege were quite different between the two eras. The cleavage is summarized, oddly enough, by a decidedly anti-Stalinist scholar, Maria Hirszowicz, in a recent book:

“The enormous pressures imposed by Stalin on the party and state bureaucrats obliged them to be feverishly active and left them no time for a private life; simultaneously, the growing terror and ideological uniformity discouraged the administrators from stepping out of line in both their personal interests and habits. On top of all this, the general scarcity took its toll. Their salaries were not very high, their flats were drab, their clothes far from smart and their social life very limited....

“The model of the ‘Soviet man’ formed under Stalin’s rule imposed heavy demands on the party state bureaucracy. In official propaganda and literature the ‘Soviet man’ was depicted as one prepared to sacrifice his life for the benefit of the party... he mistrusted those of upper class origin; he despised the set of values inherited from the ruling class; he rejected western attitudes; he was modest in his life style....

“Under Khrushchev and even more so under Brezhnev, the ethos of the party state bureaucracy seemed to evolve, essentially, into something resembling western consumerist culture.... Consumerism ceased to be regarded as an expression of a petty- bourgeois tendency

and acquired respectability as the manifestation of the personal needs and cultural tastes of the individual.... The western standard of living, which was once rejected as the nadir of human culture, was not only approved but set up as a worthwhile model....

“The party and state bureaucracy has developed, then, a new ethos in which the pursuit of a career, the pleasure of purchasing goods, including new gadgets, the placing of personal interests at the centre of one’s private life and the acquisition of as much money as possible to satisfy the new wants, are not only approved but encouraged. This is a general trend that applies to all strata in society, yet it is the bureaucracy first of all that is given the opportunity to satisfy these new aspirations....<sup>26</sup>

Despite the obvious expression of the author’s prejudices in these lines, the essential distinction is clear enough. This is not to uphold Stalin’s method of dealing with this contradiction as a model for a contemporary socialist society—much has been learned in the intervening years about both the problems and dangers tied up with privileged consumption and the necessity to mobilize the masses to struggle against, restrict, and lay the basis to eventually uproot such capitalist remnants. Still it is one thing for errors to occur within an overall setting of proletarian power, and another for such errors to be persisted in, deepened, and petrified into pillars of neobourgeois rule.

## Comparisons

Comparisons of the Soviet bourgeoisie to the American bourgeoisie seem to be inevitable. Matthews attempts a rough estimate of the consumption income (both monetary and direct consumption) of the *lowest* level of Soviet “elite,” a strata for which somewhat greater information is known or can be inferred. (Szymanski does not like Matthews’ estimate, but it is confirmed, for what it’s worth, by Yanowitch and McAuley, two other bourgeois academicians whom he cites approvingly in a number of contexts.)<sup>27</sup>

Matthews concludes that the lowest income of his elite group is approximately five to eight times the average earnings of Soviet workers and employees. This compares to a threshold income for the same top proportion of American incomes of about twelve times the average earnings in the U.S.<sup>28</sup>

Matthews’ “lowest-level income elite” does not really deal with the monopoly-capitalist class proper in either the Soviet Union or the United States. However, it is perhaps useful as a surrogate measure, given the poverty of information generally. If so, it suggests that the Soviet bourgeoisie has yet to attain the imperial splendor of the U.S. ruling monopoly-capitalist class, and to that extent they partake of the character of Marx’s “capitalist upstarts.” However, it also suggests (particularly if we recall the Soviet figures reflect only consumption income, while the U.S. figures include some income that will be invested) that, in relative terms, the Soviet bourgeoisie does quite well for itself.

As we go further up the Soviet hierarchy, luxury consumption, particularly in the form of direct consumption, rises rapidly—and available information declines just as rapidly. One of the more widely cited estimates of income at the top is that given by Roy Medvedev (the Soviet “Marxist” critic and

advocate of “democratization” of what he perceives and supports as Soviet “socialism”), based on personal experience:

“In Soviet ministries and important military establishments, the ratio between the highest and the lowest rates of pay is also 1:20 or even 1:30, but if one takes into consideration the many services available to nomenklatura officials at public expense (food coupons, medical treatment, holidays, personal transport, dachas, etc.), the total value translated into monetary terms would make the ratio 1:50 or sometimes even 1:100. Obviously this is quite excessive for a socialist country.”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the privileges of the Soviet bourgeoisie are so obvious and well-known that even many pro-Soviet forces are forced to admit their existence. For instance, Goldfield and Rothenberg, in a book at one point widely distributed by Line of March and intended to prove that the Soviet Union is *not* capitalist, admit that, “The Soviet elite enjoys access to living quarters, health care, education, and consumer goods denied the Soviet masses. Further, the tastes of this elite for luxury goods and conspicuous consumption is decadent even by western standards.”<sup>30</sup>

The admission of the pervasiveness of Soviet bourgeois luxury consumption squeezed from the value produced by the working class (nationally and internationally), while in itself not proof of the capitalist nature of the Soviet ruling class (the predominance of the law of value and surplus value are the essential questions there), points to the exploitation of the masses by the Soviet ruling class. Yet these people argue that this luxury consumption founded on exploitation reinforces the Soviet rulers’ allegiance to “socialism,” which has given them these privileges.<sup>31</sup> And these same revisionist theoreticians accuse Maoists of “idealism”!

### **Rising Consumption, “Declining Inequality,” and Revisionist Political Stabilization**

Up until 1966 wages, consumption, and social welfare benefits had risen in the Soviet Union. At the same time, relative income inequality (among the people, not between the people and the ruling class) had declined. Insofar as they have been the product of the policies of the revisionist state, they need to be analyzed from the standpoint of grasping the character of the capitalist state as an organ for defending and reproducing the domination of the ruling class and capitalist relations generally.

While consumption and wages have been rising in the Soviet Union, this is comparable to the trend in other imperialist countries in the postwar period.<sup>32</sup> To the extent that they are not simply a product of a period of economic expansion, higher wages and various social welfare benefits represent a conscious attempt by the ruling class to underwrite “social peace” in the imperialist metropolises and bribe a more bourgeoisified section of the working class in particular with a portion of the spoils of imperialism. This is essentially the case in the Soviet Union as well. While a complete analysis is beyond the scope of this article, it is interesting to note that Soviet studies themselves reveal substantial differences among Soviet workers in regard to wages, access to social benefits, and a number of other measures which suggest the division of the Soviet working class along classic imperialist lines of a more bourgeoisified labor aristocracy and a more proletarian section.<sup>33</sup>

The contention that income inequality has been declining in the Soviet Union is of some particular interest, as restricting income inequalities is a long-term task under socialism. First, the facts of the matter have frequently been distorted. The Soviet “decile ratios,” which are generally the basis for the assertion of declining inequality, measure the ratio of the highest earnings in the bottom 90% of earnings to the highest earnings in the bottom 10% of earnings—in other words, *these ratios are completely unaffected by the size and trend of earnings in the top 10%*. These ratios only measure earnings trends *among the people*. It is misleading and dishonest to attempt, as is often done, to pass them off as proof of any decline in inequality between the people and the ruling class.<sup>34</sup>

Further, while it is true that the decile ratio decreased from 4.44 in 1956 to 2.83 in 1968, it has been increasing since then, registering 3.35 in 1976<sup>35</sup> (the most recently available figure), or almost precisely equal to the degree of inequality in Great Britain by the same measure.<sup>36</sup>

But the essential question is not simply the trends themselves but what these trends represent: do they represent the strengthening and reproduction of socialist relations or do they represent the strengthening of capitalist relations, i.e., the law of value?<sup>\*</sup> In this regard, it is quite significant that the Soviets themselves explain both the decline and the increase in decile-measured inequality by reference to what they call “objective factors”—in reality, value relations.

The Soviets attribute the decline in inequality among the people from 1956 to 1968 to increases in the skill and educational composition of the labor force and shifts in sectoral development—not to any turn toward egalitarian principles of distributions.<sup>37</sup> Of these changes, the powerful trend towards urbanization is particularly important, as the income of a collective farmer was (and is) considerably below that of an ordinary laborer. In some regards, however, the Soviets themselves probably overstate the case. While they are undoubtedly correct as concerns some of the overall factors at work in the economy during this period, the increases at that time in the minimum wage in particular (though they did serve the economic goal of drawing more women into the labor force) seem to be explicable mainly in terms of considerations of the *political* stability of the new revisionist regime. (Even after these minimum-wage increases, in 1974, one out of every three Soviet children lived in a family with income below the official—understated—Soviet poverty line.<sup>38</sup>)

The more recent trend toward increasing earnings inequality among the people is also justified by the Soviets essentially by reference to value categories: “A characteristic feature of the seventies is also the increase in the differentiation of wages as one means of strengthening the principle of material incentives.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup> While pay differentials were quite restricted during the '20s and beginning of the '30s, they were expanded during the mid-'30s and persisted into the postwar period. Some of this was in fact necessary in economic terms, due to the early severe shortage of skilled workers and the abnormal situation created by the decimation of the Soviet population in World War 2. Much of it was also politically motivated, as with the exceptional income given to Stakhanovite workers. In any event, in this sphere as in the economy overall, no one, East or West, has accused Stalin of paying *too much* attention to the law of value. However, he did not fully appreciate that such pay differentials are remnants of capitalism and need to be restricted over time, as was the case with China under Mao's leadership.

In the '60s rising wages and social welfare benefits and an increased minimum wage contributed to a short-term decline in inequality among the people. The recovery and economic growth after the years of sacrifice under socialism in preparing for, waging, and recovering from the immense devastation of World War 2 made it possible to achieve these things without any significant alteration in the proportion of the Soviet GNP devoted to private and collective forms of consumption.<sup>40</sup> But the need to carry out these measures was profoundly political.

The transition to capitalist relations—begun in the late '50s and relatively consolidated by the end of the '60s—was fraught with immense dangers and difficulties for the new Soviet bourgeoisie. The necessary and virulent attack on Stalin in 1956 set loose politically destabilizing influences throughout the Soviet-led bloc, and at least partially caused the legitimacy crises in some of the People's Democracies (e.g. the revolts in Hungary and Poland), while serving to further politically disorient the Soviet masses. Meanwhile, U.S. pressure on the Soviets, though relaxed in some respects, still continued; Soviet leaders had to both secure and protect their zone of influence in Europe as well as find the ways to begin penetration into the Third World in the face of U.S. ascendancy. And all the while the revisionists had to carry forward changes in the realm of politics and ideology that would lay the basis for the fully capitalist restructuring of the Soviet economic base.

They thus stood in dire need of the acquiescence of the Soviet working class. The banner under which they sought to win the allegiance—or at least passive acceptance—of the workers was the banner of “goulash communism.” Of necessity, particularly in the '60s, a significant amount of goulash was dished out to the Soviet workers (though they have yet to develop the level of bourgeoisification of sections of some Western imperialist working classes). Szymanski's argument that this is evidence of “socialism” is merely the old economist theme song that, in Lenin's phrase, a kopek added to a ruble is worth more than any working-class power and socialism—or, in this case, that it is working-class power.

The trend toward equalization of incomes among the people was consciously reversed by the Soviet state in the 1970s. The late '70s and '80s have seen a slowdown in the rate of Soviet economic growth. Whether the Soviet bourgeoisie will be able to maintain or even increase current levels of wages and social welfare benefits—which is assuredly to their political advantage as they strive to win their people to preparation for yet a third imperialist world war—depends, as it does in the West, on their ability to stave off economic crisis as they prepare for the ultimate bourgeois means of temporarily resolving the crisis of the world imperialist system: world war.

Incidentally, the question of the alleged narrowing of income differentials and the raising of the social wage should not be considered apart from the significant “second economy” in the Soviet Union. This includes everything from private plots in farming (which accounted for one-third of all man-hours in farming and one-fourth of the gross output in Soviet agriculture) to what is recognized as extensive thievery of state property, widespread speculation in hard-to-come-by goods, “tipping” of sales personnel and government officials (i.e., graft), and private entrepreneurial operations. One observer of the Soviet economy cites the “large number of household repair and building services, typically provided by people ‘moonlighting’ outside, or even during, working hours; automotive repair; the sewing and tailoring of garments; the moving of furniture and other transport services”; and goes on to remark on the pervasive

character of these sorts of activities—e.g., the widespread knowledge that ownership of a car necessarily entails dealing on the private market for repairs, spare parts, and even gasoline. In addition there are contractors who organize production brigades from the cities to work on collective farms, the classical underground factory owners, and finally the corrupt officials at the higher levels. As examples of the latter, this specialist documents the widespread sale of party and government positions in Azerbaidzhan around 1970 (the sums ranged from 10,000 rubles to 250,000 for Minister of Trade), and in Georgia, two years later, where the central party apparatus stepped in to Stop it.<sup>41</sup>

These phenomena are significant from several aspects. First, most scholars hold that they are necessary to social reproduction in the USSR, and in particular fill crucial gaps in the realm of consumption, including among the basic masses. At the same time, this kind of growing shadow economy makes for yet another source of anarchy (and is itself—along with the fabled problems in Soviet distribution of consumption goods altogether—an expression of the basic anarchy of the system). Finally, these kinds of activities indicate the basis for a much wider gap in income among the masses than is commonly reported, showing the partial character of the data on income equality among the people as well as the real limits on the so-called social wage (since many must resort to the second economy to actually procure essential services like decent health care, etc.). They also indicate soil for the emergence of significant sections of the petty bourgeoisie and the entrenchment of advantages for the skilled workers (relative to the unskilled), both of which exacerbate class stratification.

In sum, distribution in the Soviet Union is fully compatible with and substantially reflects the rule of the bourgeoisie. Luxury consumption, if somewhat peculiar in form, nevertheless takes place on a socially significant scale and plays a role similar to luxury consumption in the West. The distribution among the masses reflects some remnants of the socialist past (including in the political necessity facing the Soviet rulers), but the determinant factor today is the dominance (and reinforcement) of the law of value.

### **The Class Origins Argument and Economist Instrumentalism**

The claim that there is no wealthy elite in the Soviet Union dovetails with the second key argument advanced as to why the working class rules in the Soviet Union—the class origins of the Soviet leadership. At the New York debate, Szymanski stressed:

“In the United States, only about 3 percent of the top businessmen and the top managers are from the working class or poor farm families. In the Soviet Union it’s 80 percent and constant. That’s a qualitative difference—80 percent of the top managers and top Central Committee people are from the common class, compared to 3 percent in the United States—that’s a qualitative difference that reflects a qualitatively different mode of production, because if there was a ruling class there, even a small one, they would act like it if they had the power, and they would pass it on.”<sup>42</sup>

In a similar vein, Laibman includes in his “list of ingredients” for determining the presence of a ruling elite, “evidence that most positions of authority in the political-administrative hierarchy are occupied by people who have had elite socialization, i.e., of non-working-class backgrounds.”<sup>43</sup> Thus the class



character of the state is assumed to be strongly linked to, even in large part directly determined by, the class *origins* of its leading personnel.

Szymanski reiterates that any putative Soviet elite must be shown to use its power, in a way that plainly equates the “use of power” by capitalist elites to the enrichment of specific sectoral interests through control and/or manipulation of the state apparatus. In a characteristic passage, Szymanski says:

“What could be more profitable than General Dynamics, the Trident submarines, and the military stuff? Corporations are making immense amounts of money off the military, but the thing that happens there is they tax you and I and working class people, and that money ends up in the corporations. Across the board, the capitalists don’t do anything that's not profitable.”<sup>44</sup>

Szymanski’s analysis of the class nature of the state through (a) the social origins of its leadership and (b) their manipulation of the apparatus to serve (individual) sectoral interests is a form of bourgeois-sociological elite theory, albeit with “left” trappings. Within the left this paradigm has generally been called instrumentalism, which in our view means more precisely that the state is approached as an essentially neutral instrument subject to the manipulation of different elites.\*

Bourgeois sociologists often counterpose the model of “plural elites” to the Marxist view of the state as a class dictatorship. Taking the Roosevelt New Deal coalition, for example, they point to the role played by labor unions, small farmers and small businessmen, ethnic minorities, etc.—as well as the opposition of some sections of “big business” to Roosevelt—and argue that no single class can accurately be said to have dominated the state. Hence the state as a neutral instrument; reforms, by extension, are seen as measures of supposed working-class power.<sup>†</sup>

One stream of left thought tries to refute that argument by attacking its evidence. To pursue the example of the Democratic Party, the radical instrumentalists have attempted to unearth evidence of hidden direct dominance by various financial fat cats. While such dominance evidently exists, the more profound question is the social role played by the Democratic Party. Unfortunately, the approach of the radical instrumentalists leaves the theoretical foundations of the “plural elites” argument intact, and has enabled bourgeois sociology to dominate the terms of the debate.

In fact, the class origins of the leaders of the bourgeois state are often diverse, but their objective function—executive committee for the common affairs of the bourgeoisie—is not. Marx notes in *The Civil War in France* that the French bourgeoisie in the 1850s and 1860s was well-served by the government of Louis Bonaparte, which largely excluded individual capitalists and thus evaded the petty profiteering and endless bickering in which the bourgeoisie was then bogged down.<sup>‡45</sup> Our point is not

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\* In this analysis of instrumentalism, the authors have drawn on Nicos Poulantzas’ article in *New Left Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1969, “The Problem of the Capitalist State.”

† The CPUSA, even in its glory days of the ’30s, put forward this openly bourgeois argument to justify their support for Roosevelt from 1935 on, albeit at times with a thin coating of Marxist terminology.

‡ Marx’s famous statement in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is relevant here:

that the individual actions of specific political leaders somehow don't matter, but that (1) their range of political choices is constrained and conditioned by the requirements of the capitalist accumulation process and the historical development and particularity of the institutions of the political superstructure; and (2) their class origins have little to do with how effectively or fully they serve the bourgeoisie.

The practical importance of this issue becomes clearer in considering the role of social-democratic regimes in Europe—Germany in the wake of World War 1, France today, etc. The parameters of the Szymanski/Laibman analysis (and instrumentalism generally) cannot really provide for a critique of such governments.\* Anyone who hopes to expose the Mitterrand regime's class character through either analyzing the social origins of its members, or locating which sectors of the French bourgeoisie are enriching themselves through that regime's various measures is at best way wide of the mark. The regime is an adaptation by the French bourgeois *system* to a particular set of internal and external political and economic circumstances, in a context set mainly by an approaching interimperialist war. Even without the scions of French wealth the Mitterrand regime has been quite vigorous in pursuing French imperial interests.

Lenin did not characterize the democratic republic as the best possible shell for capitalism because men of wealth could most easily penetrate its high positions; he was pointing to the suppleness of its institutions, and to its ability (especially with the advent of imperialism) to bribe and deceive significant sections of the masses so as to “establish its power so securely, so firmly, that *no* change, either of persons, of institutions, or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic, can shake it.”<sup>46</sup> Especially during World War I and the revolutionary upsurge which followed it, Lenin stressed the variegated channels of bourgeois influence among the masses, and the class enemy's particular attention to incorporating social-democratic luminaries into the parliaments and war cabinets, and using the social-democratic parties and unions as important conduits for bourgeois political influence. Hence, we would maintain that a Leninist view of the state necessitates a stand against the crude economic determinism pushed by Szymanski (and Laibman).

Szymanski's earlier-cited, off-the-cuff analysis of U.S. military spending puts forth a similarly reductionist model of the actions of the capitalist state. Let's be clear: important state policies like

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“Just as little must one imagine that the democratic representatives are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically. This is, in general, the relationship between the *political* and *literary representatives* of a class and the class they represent.” [Note 45.]

Today's revisionists and social democrats differ in one respect—the class limits which straitjacket their thinking are those of the big, not the petty, bourgeoisie.

\* Since revisionism internationally pins significant hopes on coalitions with these and similar forces, the limitations of the analysis make a nice fit with revisionist political aims.

military spending—as well as areas like military and diplomatic strategy overall, concerted aid programs (e.g., the Alliance for Progress), international trade and monetary policies, initiatives concerning key branches of domestic industry (e.g., energy policy)—are undertaken in the interests of the *national capital as a whole*. The state at its highest level mediates these interests of the national capital. While its personnel often represent an amalgam of the key blocs of finance capital, even having been groomed in specific stables, as a governing bloc they principally represent the class overall—they fight not for specific sectoral interests, but for the long-range strategic interests of the *system*.

Moreover, Szymanski negates the state's existence on a plane higher than economics and in effect, he raises economics *above* politics. Politics, as Lenin stated, is the *concentrated expression* of economics. The political sphere necessarily assumes a degree of autonomy from the profit sheets of different financial blocs or even “what's good for the economy overall,” in the short run. Vietnam is the classic case in point. The political exigencies of maintaining the overall U.S. empire determined the U.S. aggression there, as well as its later withdrawal. Its effects on the U.S. domestic economy—let alone how it happened to benefit this or that bloc of capital—were very, very secondary in launching the war.

What is crucial to grasp is that the economic base of U.S. society makes neocolonial wars like Vietnam inevitable, and that the specific position of the U.S. in the imperialist world led to prosecute that war.

It's true that this process was the product of contradiction and struggle within the ranks of the bourgeoisie, but those struggles reflected opposed evaluations, strategies, and initiatives *on the political plane* (within an overall unified context of furthering the strategic interests of the national capital). It is a caricature of Marxism to analyze those struggles as shadow-plays concealing supposedly more profound differences focusing on “whose ox is being gored.”

To conclude—the question of the imperialist state is a crucial one for the revolution, deserving more attention in its own right. However, any serious discussion must be founded on the basic orientation fought for by Lenin, and must take into account three key functional areas of the state: class dictatorship (including repression, concessions, legitimacy rituals, and so forth, for the purpose of controlling the masses); assuring the reproduction of capitalist production relations (economic management, interventions and adjustments in the various circuits of capital, etc.); and the defense and extension of the international interests of the imperialist national capital.

These functions require and give rise to extensive and highly integrated structures, which make up the core institutions of the imperialist state. The institutional structures of the various capitalist states vary more or less according to historical circumstance and political contingency, but all are ultimately circumscribed and determined by the exigencies of capitalist accumulation.

Further, the capitalist state is not the preserve or province or direct arm of any particular unit of capital; it serves the larger politico-strategic interests of the total national capital in its three main interrelated functions.

Finally, in capitalist society the contradiction between leaders and led is concentrated in the antagonism between bureaucratic repressive structures and the broad masses. These are the essentials of the bourgeois state, and these indeed apply to and provide the theoretical basis to analyze and understand the Soviet Union.

### **Birthright vs. the Social Reproduction of the Bourgeoisie**

“If there is a ruling class,” Szymanski stated at the debate, “it must act like one.” He continued:

“It has to have luxury consumption, it has to use its privileges, and has to pass that on. And if the answer is, ‘well, they have a new, more advanced form of ruling class,’ that doesn’t have luxury consumption, it doesn’t have a lot of privileges, and doesn’t pass it on, you have to ask why not? If they’re so powerful, why don’t they use that power like every other ruling class does? Don’t they care about their children?”<sup>47</sup>

Szymanski’s assertion that if the bourgeoisie cannot pass on its capital then it cannot be the bourgeoisie deserves some attention. The question of which comes first—a ruling class, or the specific social relations that it embodies and represents—is not the old chicken-and-egg conundrum, but an important point of Marxism.

Lenin’s remark in the early years of proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union is to the point:

“On the ground cleared of one bourgeois generation, new generations continually appear in history, as long as the ground gives rise to them, and it does give rise to any number of bourgeois. As for those who look at the victory over the capitalists in the way that the petty proprietors look at it—‘they grabbed, let me have a go too’—indeed, every one of them is the source of a new generation of bourgeois.”<sup>48</sup>

“As long as the ground gives rise to them”—earlier works have analyzed why the “ground” of Soviet society is imperialist, and why production as the production and self-expansion of value necessarily constitutes the essential economic reproduction of the state-monopoly capitalist class and a propertyless proletariat. But what is the specific mechanism of the social reproduction of the bourgeoisie, i.e., how is the next generation of bourgeois selected and developed?

Inheritance of private property, and the consequent weight, particularly in the first stages of capitalist development, of the bourgeois family as an institution for the social reproduction of the capitalist class, dates back at least to forms of private property developed under slave society and codified in Roman law, upon which such early formulations of bourgeois jurisprudence as the Napoleonic Code were based. With the rise of monopoly capitalism and the development of more socialized forms of private appropriation (notably modern-day corporations) the educational system grew in significance as an institution for the social reproduction of the capitalist class and for class stratification generally.<sup>49</sup> The corporate hierarchy and other economic administrative institutions also developed a greater importance in this regard.

Familial social origins do continue to play an important role in the social reproduction of the capitalist class in the West. However, one thing that distinguishes classes under capitalism from the social estates of the feudal period is that social positions are *not* strictly hereditary. In fact, the restlessness of the capitalist mode of production from the very beginning cuts against the rise of an hereditary aristocracy.

Beyond this, Szymanski's argument is simply an extension of the view that directly personal private property in the means of production is the essential feature of capitalism, which we have already dealt with at length. It is its existence as a personification of capital, and not the particularities of its social reproduction, that marks a class as capitalist. Second, such a view ignores such phenomena in the West as state-owned capitalist enterprise, capital controlled by religious institutions, pension funds, union treasuries and the like. In addition, a greater or lesser degree of "inter-generational class mobility" (the *nouveau riche*) is characteristic of capitalism at various stages in its development. And even where membership in the ruling class often has a strong "hereditary" bias, control of particular corporations—not to mention individual positions—frequently changes hands.

As for the Soviet Union, the two main institutions for the social reproduction of the bourgeoisie are the party hierarchy and the educational system.

While during the Stalin period many political leaders, top management, and even many specialists often began their careers as workers—being promoted on the basis of political criteria and often receiving any special education later in life—this has changed decisively in the revisionist period. As one Western academic summarizes the evidence from Soviet studies and other sources: "Higher managerial positions are also increasingly staffed by specialists with higher or specialized secondary education received prior to labor market entry.... There is little doubt... that the passage of time has seen a decline in the proportion of managerial personnel and technical specialists who begin their work careers in manual positions...."<sup>50</sup>

Available biographical data and other sources indicate that this trend is characteristic of the core of the state-monopoly capitalist class as well. In Alec Nove's words: "it must be stressed that higher education has now become a necessary (though not sufficient) condition to get into *nomenklatura* and into senior positions generally," and increasingly Soviet bureaucrats are typically recruited into the hierarchy straight out of school.<sup>51</sup> The essence of the matter, even in the case of those who do still nominally begin their careers as "workers," is captured in the words of a recent popular Soviet play: "The point is that he is not going to stay here long. He will dance around the furnace for half a year or so and up he will go climbing. But for the rest of his life he will call himself a member of the working class."<sup>52</sup>

However, despite the growing role of the educational system in the social reproduction of the capitalist class, the Communist Party remains the preeminent institution for the selection and reproduction of the ruling class. Indeed, the term *nomenklatura*, often used interchangeably with "elite" in the parlance of Western Sovietologists, refers to those positions appointed by or requiring approval from the appropriate party body and carrying with them special privileges according to rank such as we have described. The careful training, testing, and selection of individuals by the appropriate party bodies as they move up through the hierarchy ensures adherence to the ideology, outlook, and objective class function of the revisionist bourgeoisie on the part of those newly entering its ranks, as well as the loyalty and obedience of those at the lower levels of the bureaucracy through which they have passed. The core

of the state-monopoly capitalist class has become an increasingly stable group. For instance, even a somewhat sympathetic observer of the Soviet scene has remarked, “In some respects Central Committee membership during the Brezhnev era took on the appearance of a life peerage—at least members remained until well past normal retirement age.”<sup>53</sup>

As we’ve seen, the defenders of the Soviet Union make a big deal about the working-class background of many of the current top Soviet leaders. This is, in a significant sense, a product of the socialist period. The present top revisionist leadership is largely drawn from those who came to the fore in the wake of the purges of the 1930s, in a period when the Communist Party and the then socialist state were consciously developing a new leadership and intelligentsia drawn from the ranks of the working class.<sup>54</sup>

While social origins are not an essential distinguishing feature of a capitalist class, available information suggests that the family does have more than a little influence on the social reproduction of the Soviet bourgeoisie, though less than is generally the case in the Western imperialist countries.

Western academic studies, contrasting biographical data on older top Soviet leadership and younger important politicians and administrators recruited more recently, indicate that the proportion of those of working-class origin has been falling, while the proportion drawn from the “intelligentsia” (a broad category including the so-called “administrative-managerial stratum”) has been rising.<sup>55</sup> While Soviet sociologists do not study top leaders, their studies confirm a similar trend among management and specialists at the enterprise level.<sup>56</sup>

This appears to be due in part to the greater role played by the educational system in reproducing class stratification generally. Soviet studies show that the children of white-collar workers are three times as likely to get into college as the children of manual workers—and the disproportion is much higher at prestigious universities. (It would undoubtedly be higher still if manual workers were compared to more privileged strata alone, rather than white-collar workers as a whole, a category that includes many proletarian clerical and sales workers.)<sup>57</sup>

At the pinnacle of Soviet society, certain universities and institutes have become known as the province of the children of the elite. Such, for instance, are the faculties of journalism and law at Moscow State University, as they are largely “political” fields, as well as the Foreign Languages Institute and the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MIMO), that lead to diplomatic careers. One journalist recounts the following conversation: “‘You have to have very good Party and Komsomol recommendations to get into MIMO,’ one graduate told me, and he mentioned a score of sons and daughters of Party and Government officials who had got in through connections.... Few ‘ordinary’ students make it because, although this is not a secret institution, it is not listed in the normal handbook for Soviet institutions of higher education for prospective applicants. My friend said he knew of an instructor at MIMO, a Party member, who had been fired for refusing to obey orders from the dean to give top grades to children from elite families. . . .”<sup>58</sup> While this last may be an exaggeration or extreme instance, Nove makes clear that “in recent years there has been a notable increase in the intensity of the scramble for higher education places, owing to the fact that full secondary education has expanded much more rapidly than have institutions of university status.... The use of backstairs methods and string pulling via influence has

therefore become more important, and here nomenklatura officials and their hangers-on have evident advantages....”<sup>59</sup>

In sum, as the Soviet sociologist Filippov himself admits, “the systems of vocational, specialized secondary and higher education are nothing but ‘extensions’ of the existing social structure. Each educational track is ‘tied’ to a corresponding class, social group, or social stratum.”<sup>60</sup>

We do not suggest that the Soviet ruling class is or is soon to become an “hereditary” group—nor is this an essential attribute of a capitalist class. What the evidence does suggest is that the Soviet state-monopoly capitalist class is increasingly drawn from administrative, managerial, and intellectual strata in the upper levels of Soviet society. The Soviet bourgeoisie is socially reproduced primarily through the operation of the party and educational institutions and, secondarily, the family.

### **The Role of Managers**

Szymanski’s final empirical argument on the non-existence of a Soviet bourgeois class centers on an analogy between middle-level managers in the U.S. and what Szymanski calls “those in ‘power elite’ positions in the USSR.”<sup>61</sup> Since the capitalist class employs managers, why can’t the working class?, he asks. And conversely, since managers must be employed, how can they as a class actually control an economy? Bob Avakian’s response to this argument is worth quoting at length:

“Szymanski’s argument that the managers in the Soviet Union are just that—managers—and could no more run the economy (and the country) than could their counterparts in the (openly) imperialist countries, can be dispatched rather quickly. First, we are not saying that these strata (enterprise managers and the like) do in fact run the economy, that they are in fact the ruling bourgeoisie. They *are* a very important social base (of support) for the actual *state-monopoly capitalist* ruling class (a point made in ‘Tarnished’) and they are one source (under socialism as well as under capitalism itself, including revisionist capitalism) of new bourgeois elements, some of whom will actually rise to the ‘heights’ of the ruling class. But more fundamentally, this line of argumentation—or analogy—by Szymanski reveals a basic error in methodology and an ignorance (real or pretended) of the difference between capitalism and socialism (as it *actually* has existed in the world up till now and will continue to exist, as it emerges, for some time in the future). That is, the reason the managers of plants, etc., are not the real ruling class and controllers of capital in the (openly) capitalist countries (and especially in the stage of imperialism) is that the social position of these managers—and in particular their position in the overall social productive process—does not enable them to exert control (or effective ownership) over the means of production and to exercise political power in society. It *does* enable them to have a privileged existence vis-à-vis the workers, to lord it over the latter and to have command over them in the productive process, up to a certain point: but, on the other hand, it does *not* allow them to do the same with (or be anything but subordinate to) the big (finance) capitalists—these managers have neither the capital nor the political power to do this. And for them to do so would require an actual ‘revolution of the managerial class,’ which (a) they are not capable of achieving, even if a few of them might vaguely conceive of such an idea; and (b) even if it were somehow achieved, it would only result in their rising to the same position as the finance capitalists they

‘overthrew,’ but would in no way make the managers *as a stratum (as managers)* the commanders of the capital of society, the wielders of political power, etc.

“How does this compare to the situation of this stratum (enterprise managers, for example) in a socialist country and in a revisionist one? While, again, these managers are *not* the ruling class in the Soviet Union—it is not this stratum that was the decisive, commanding force in the revisionist take-over and restoration of capitalism nor is it such in the (capitalist-imperialist) society today in the USSR—still this stratum does occupy a privileged position, in terms of the division of labor, income, etc., vis-à-vis the proletariat—and it did even when the USSR was actually socialist (as is the case to one degree or another in all socialist societies). This provides the basis (again, even assuming you are dealing with a socialist country in fact) for these strata to lord it over the workers and to turn their relations with them into antagonistic ones (with more than a little help from revisionists at the ‘commanding heights’ of society). And if, somehow, these strata did ‘seize power’ in a socialist country, there would certainly be a basis for them to exploit and politically suppress the proletariat. So what, after all, is Szymanski’s point? Let us summarize what his argument really amounts to—and what is the truth his argument is attempting to camouflage. First, his argument is essentially that just as managers in capitalist countries are merely employees, even if fairly privileged ones, of the actual owning and ruling class, the capitalists, and cannot be anything else, so it is in socialist society—the managers are, and can only be, the employees, even if fairly privileged ones, of the owning and ruling class, the working class. But in reality it is like this: the managers in capitalist society, even if they could assume (rise to) the position of the owning and ruling class, could only maintain the same capitalist system, merely replacing their employers with themselves; and in socialist society it is the same—the managers, if somehow they could rise to the position of the ruling class, could only do so as a *capitalist* ruling class (that is, by restoring capitalism), replacing their former employers (the working class) with themselves as the owners and rulers and replacing socialism with capitalism. In other words, the role of such strata as employees of the working class in socialist society is only relative and *sharply contradictory*, and it has proven to be the case that it is profoundly mistaken and very dangerous to simply look upon the managers (and along with them other privileged strata, generally speaking the intellectual workers of various kinds) as mere employees of the working class under socialism (as they were of the capitalists under capitalism). Lenin once said, at a very early point, that the managers had worked for the capitalists and they could work just as well (or even better) for the proletariat, but he certainly came to realize and emphasize that there were grave problems associated with the need to employ, even to ‘bribe’ these strata, that new bourgeois elements were engendered among them, posing a real threat to socialism, etc. All this has everything to do with the *transitional* and *profoundly contradictory* nature of socialist society—a point fundamentally in opposition to and negated by the revisionists—with the persistence of the ‘three great differences,’ bourgeois right and other inequalities, commodities, money, wage-labor, etc., as well as the existence of socialist countries in a world dominated by imperialism. Once again, arguments like Szymanski’s are startlingly shallow and ridiculous, and they are no less treacherous.”<sup>62</sup>

As for the particular role of Soviet managers, one should note that the “managers” of Soviet statistics are enterprise managers. As Soviet enterprises typically consist of a single plant, the highest management



position in the enterprise (the director) is roughly comparable to a plant manager or plant foreman in the West.<sup>63</sup>

If one can believe Western academic comparisons of Western and Soviet studies, we find that the gap between workers' and managers' pay is roughly comparable in the Soviet Union and Britain (though greater in the U.S.);<sup>64</sup> that the decision-making authority of Soviet enterprise directors is somewhat greater than comparable North American plant foremen<sup>65</sup>; that relative educational qualifications are comparable to the U.S., though higher than in Britain; and that managerial careers are relatively stable, as in France, compared to greater mobility in the U.S. and Britain.<sup>66</sup> While perhaps of interest to some, all of this does not prove a great deal, other than the erroneous methodology of those who would make Soviet managers a stand-in for the revisionist ruling class, or regale us with comparisons between Soviet enterprise directors and Western finance capitalists.

In sum, all four points adduced by Szymanski to show that “there is no evidence that a ‘state bourgeoisie’ exists in the USSR”—alleged absence of a wealthy elite, working-class origins of Soviet leaders, noninheritance of elite status within families, and insignificant inequality and privilege—prove nothing of the kind. In fact, when the bourgeois analytic framework is stripped away and the data more thoroughly examined, and when Marxism is brought to bear on the question, significant aspects of the forms of the reproduction of bourgeois social relations in the Soviet Union begin to emerge.

### III. Proletarian Power and the Soviet Union

Besides their attempted empirical proof of the nonexistence of a Soviet bourgeoisie, Szymanski and Laibman also develop positive arguments as to the proletarian character of the Soviet state. These come down to data on the effectiveness of proletarian participation in the Soviet state and theoretical arguments concerning the structural guarantees afforded by the socialist mode of production. Both are informed by an incorrect theory on the relation between base and superstructure in socialist society.

The arguments concerning the scope and meaning of workers' participation are dealt with well in “The ‘Tarnished Socialism’ Thesis,” and we will only add a few points here before moving on to the more theoretical material.

#### **Revisionist Democracy**

Szymanski notes a number of avenues of “worker influence” in the Soviet ruling apparatus. There is, for instance, the matter of elections. While warning us that these are hardly the “most important mechanism of exerting power” in the Soviet Union, he sternly cautions us that they are “*not* the farce that they are portrayed in the West to be.”<sup>67</sup> He goes on to note that in 1969 candidates were rejected in 145 local Soviet elections—certainly not a rubber stamp. But how significant proportionally have such rejections been? To get a clearer picture, let's examine some more recent data from the 1975 elections. In that year 68 candidates were defeated. This works out to a rejection rate of 1 out of every 30,000 candidates who were up for consideration! And of these 68, 62 were at the village level, where there was an average electorate of 45 people. Further comment seems unnecessary.<sup>68</sup>

Szymanski also puts much stock in the Soviet press. Not only are there “extensive letters to the editors in the Soviet newspapers,” the press itself is:

“full of debates on a very wide range of issues: literary policy, economic and legal reforms, city planning, crime, pollution, farm problems, the role of the press, women’s role in the economy, access to higher education, etc. The only issues that are more or less immune from open debate and concerted criticism are the basic institutions of Soviet society (e.g., the leading role of the Communist Party, the existence of a military, the desirability of socialism) and the persons (but not the policies) of the top leaders of the party. The consensus of those who follow the Soviet media is that the breadth and depth of public debate has been growing and that in recent years there has been virtually no proposal for gradual change in the policy of the Communist Party which has not been aired in the mass media.”<sup>69</sup>

One could say much the same about the capitalist press in the West; that’s not a debater’s point, but an indication that Szymanski is really describing the universal necessity of the bourgeoisie to create public opinion. While every form of bourgeois rule rests on armed dictatorship—and the Soviets have plenty of that—it is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie to clothe this dictatorship in democratic forms, to enforce their rule not simply through recourse to violence at every turn, but also through a many-dimensional bourgeois-democratic mystification of the character of class rule and the state. As Lenin noted:

“Nothing in our times can be done without elections; nothing can be done without the masses. And in this era of printing and parliamentarism it is *impossible* to gain the following of the masses without a widely ramified, systematically managed, well-equipped system of flattery, lies, fraud, juggling with fashionable and popular catchwords, and promising all manner of reforms and blessings to the workers right and left—as long as they renounce the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.”<sup>70</sup>

Limited debate within the press allows the bourgeoisie to dominate the terms of public discourse and thinking, to stake out both the mainstream position and the limits of acceptable opposition. If workers can be drawn into this in one form or another on a bourgeois basis, the advantages for the ruling class are obvious and significant. The working class is not spontaneously communist, after all.

Despite the convergences, the Soviet state is not a bourgeois democracy out of the Western imperialist mold. In a nutshell, we could say that Soviet democracy lacks any institutionalized decision making by the masses, even in the sham sense of U.S.-style elections. There are far less civil liberties and dissent is much more constricted—though the greater liberalism in the West may be due at least as much to its greater share of the plunder in the Third World, and consequent higher living standards, as it is to the historically given shape of the bourgeois-democratic institutions. On the other hand, the Soviet masses are drawn into participation in administration of social and economic life to a much more extensive degree than are workers in the West.

The particular form of bourgeois dictatorship in the Soviet Union, then, does manifest a number of distinctive differences from the typical bourgeois-democratic forms of the West. We will call the Soviet form “revisionist democracy.”<sup>\*71</sup>

Revisionist democracy is just as truncated, hypocritical, and false for the proletariat as is bourgeois democracy in the West. As exposure of the class essence of Soviet democracy and participation has been offered elsewhere,<sup>72</sup> we will confine ourselves to a few additional observations.

The class character of revisionist democracy and participation is reflected in, among other things, who “participates”—and who controls. Looking at the question of party membership, for instance, the majority of managers, administrators, and college-trained specialists are party members. A substantial minority of middle-level white-collar and skilled blue-collar workers are members, but even in a major industry in Leningrad less than 15 percent of the unskilled proletarians belong to the party. Elsewhere, especially where women predominate, proletarian membership rates are even lower.<sup>73</sup> Soviet studies indicate similar differences in participation rates in other spheres.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, one scholar’s summary of the results of Soviet studies in Leningrad in 1969 and 1971 indicates that, “in the party, the Komsomol and the trade unions alike, executive jobs are the province of professional/upper class groups in general and of their administrative sub-group in particular. Even in the soviets, where workers commonly form a majority of deputies, professionals dominate the executive committees and monopolize their chairmanships.”<sup>75</sup>

Other evidence indicates that, despite the existence of some democratic and participatory forms, the Soviet ruling class is still having difficulty inculcating bourgeois-democratic illusions among many of the workers. A Soviet study of enterprises in three regions discovered that a majority of skilled, low-skilled, and unskilled workers felt, “they have no influence on the affairs of their work collectives,” to say nothing of society as a whole.<sup>76</sup> In a Soviet survey of worker participants in “permanent production conferences,” less than half thought their participation had any effect.<sup>77</sup> Another Soviet study of a Sverdlovsk machinery plant over the course of a year found that only 1 percent of the directives issued by plant management were related to proposals by workers<sup>78</sup> and the Soviet literature generally admits “the frequent non-fulfillment of the recommendations of the trade union committee and the production conference.”<sup>79</sup> None of this even involves a question of the control of society by the working class—which is of preeminent importance in a truly socialist society—but only “participation” in decisions reached by one-man management at the enterprise level. Yet even here Soviet ideologists, like Chkhikvadze, themselves have to admit that “workers’ participation” remains largely ineffective.<sup>80</sup>

While the Soviets have paid attention to developing forms of bourgeois-democratic political control, this does not at all substitute for straight-up armed repression. Though the Western media publicizes only

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\* There is some evidence to indicate that the Soviets attempt to export this form of democracy. The emergence of the people’s power committees in Cuba at the least coincided with the shift to full Soviet domination over the Cuban economy (and tutelage over its political institutions) in the early ’70s; the activity of these committees—“mass democracy” over the pettiest details of daily life—seems to be a species of revisionist democracy. [Note 71.] Attempts have also been made to implant similar forms in Angola, apparently with less effectiveness.

the pro-Western dissidents, we note here the report of Natalia Malakhovskaya, a Christian/feminist exile from the Soviet Union:

“...While I would not stake my head that there is not one single admirer of Trotsky in the Soviet Union, I must say that I have certainly never heard of any such person. Marxists are a different matter: most of them are confined in prisons and psychiatric hospitals. It would be interesting to hear in what other countries adherents of the official ideology are subjected to similar treatment?... As a rule, Marxist groups are made up of teenagers who have read the official textbooks on history and sociology and then, taking a look around themselves have wondered: ‘How can this be? Nothing is the way the books say it ought to be! This doesn’t follow Lenin! This doesn’t follow Marx!’ So they dig deeper into their books, whisper among themselves and hold secret meetings and discussions until such time as they are all caught. Incidentally, the authorities have no qualms about imprisoning them for there is no reason to fear any serious support from Western Marxists for these youngsters....

“It must be noted that all the underground groups in Leningrad, no matter what their leanings, maintain very close contact with each other. They are united, first of all, by their courage, their uncompromising commitment and firm refusal to swell their ranks by unselective admission of new members. This is why members of the most diverse groups quickly become fast friends, why we always helped one another: we hid each other’s materials during house searches and gave shelter to each other’s members when necessary. For this same reason my friends attended and recorded trials of neo-Marxists, even though they did not share their views...”<sup>81</sup>

While we’re on the subject of revisionist democracy and dictatorship, Szymanski’s discussion of Poland deserves at least a word of comment. Seemingly confounding double-talk with dialectics, he writes:

“As Poland has made painfully clear, manipulation and lack of consideration for the sentiments (and interests) of the masses results in demoralization and depoliticization, a decline in productivity and the decay of the moral fabric of socialist institutions, and in general social breakdown—mighty structural pressures indeed—to insure that the leaders of a socialized economy, however weak their *direct* ties to the working class, take continuous measures to increase popular participation, increase equality and expand the sphere of goods distributed on the basis of need, i.e., lead their countries towards consolidating authentic socialism and perhaps even towards full communism.”<sup>82</sup>

OK, now let’s get this straight—Jaruzelski imposed martial law (at Soviet behest) because the working class was getting too “depoliticized” and he wanted to “take some measures to increase popular participation”? One can only imagine what will happen if and when the Soviet Union feels compelled to push for “full democracy and vigorous political life.”

Actually, Szymanski’s point isn’t too far from that of the various reformists in openly capitalist societies who also decry the breakdown of normal peaceful political domination of the masses during times of upsurge and rebellion, and who complement the sounds of sirens and bullets with choruses

promising greater popular participation and a more equal distribution of wealth. Nor, indeed, is the world outlook reflected in this entire apologia.

### **The Logic of the Socialist Mode of Production**

Szymanski also makes a more openly ideological argument on the class character of Soviet state power. In the article published before the Soviet debate, he wrote:

“It is inconsistent for many Marxists to apply qualitatively different criteria to the question of whether the bourgeoisie is the ruling class in a capitalist society (or the landlord class the ruling class in a feudal society) than they do to the question of whether the proletariat is the ruling class in a socialist society....

“It is clear that there are informal or structural mechanisms operating in class societies to insure that hereditary monarchy, military juntas, fascist dictatorships, as well as popularly elected officials, act in the interest of the dominant propertied class. Why, then, can we not expect that parallel structures could not exist in socialist societies to insure that those in leading positions act in the class interests of the proletariat just as surely as the Brazilian or South Korean junta acts in the interests of capital, or feudal hereditary kings acted in the interest of landlords?”<sup>83</sup>

At the debate itself he re-expressed the point in cruder terms:

“Say if McNamara when he was head of Ford Motor Company wanted to keep his privilege and wanted to increase his income, how would he do that? He does that by maximizing profits for the corporation, by maximizing profits for the Ford family. Because that’s the logic of the capitalist mode of production. So what would happen in a socialist economy if the managers want to keep their jobs? Well, they’re going to have to maximize the logic of the socialist mode of production. The parameters of the situation put great structural constraints on the leaders—they channel ambition. So if they were secretly capitalists, they would have to act like socialists in order to keep their jobs. And that’s good enough for me, and I think that’s good enough for most of the workers.... It’s not a question of the secret motive or even of the line. It’s a question of what they do, what’s the logic of the mode of production, what’s the result, what class is in power.”<sup>84</sup>

From a highly determinist instrumentalism, Szymanski jumps to the seemingly opposite, though equally determinist, paradigm that the actions of political leaders are determined, mainly by structural constraints of the state apparatus, rather than class origins. Presumably the Soviet structural constraints hailed here by Szymanski make all his previous arguments about class origins irrelevant—Rockefeller (or McNamara!) himself could head a Soviet ministry and would still be obliged to carry out socialism.

The revisionists thus insist upon a rigid linkage between structural form and class content. One looks for central planning, or state ownership, and the matter of class rule is settled because there is no way that these forms—given the mechanistic assumptions of the argument—could accommodate capital. Interestingly, this method is not so far removed from that of Bettelheim and his followers in their attempt to deny that the Soviet Union was ever socialist, even under Lenin. Here, one simply looks for a private

sector, wage payments, or commodity exchange... and the issue is also settled, because such practices are defined to be incompatible with socialism. In both cases we have a kind of convenient litmus test, notably a particular practice or form which predetermines the character of a society.

Now there is indeed a unity to a social matrix. But it cannot be deduced by classifying and toting up, in some quantitative way, various institutions. Society is not the mere aggregation of such institutions (or practices). It is a structured, if contradictory, whole which gives determinate context to each of its (component) social institutions. Further, these institutions do not subsist as abstract entities or as things; they embody and reproduce definite class relations.

In determining if a society is on the socialist road it is necessary to examine whether or not the proletariat maintains, at the highest levels of society, the initiative to carry social transformations forward in the interests of, and to promote the advance of, world revolution. But while this initiative is backed by the power of the proletarian state and concentrated in the leading line of the vanguard party, it is rooted in specific production relations which regulate the allocation of social labor and which determine the very purpose of social production. For Marxists, then, the dynamics and direction of society turn on the complex, dialectical interaction between base and superstructure. And as the above discussion suggests, this interaction is even more complex under socialism.

In this light, it is absolutely wrong to equate capitalist and socialist society in the way Szymanski does. One particularity of capitalist society is that the suppressed (but historically rising) class, the proletariat, cannot institute the relations of production characteristic of it within the shell of the old society. This is different from all earlier societies, in which the germs of the new social relations *could* take root and gradually grow within the old. Thus, the circuits of capital and the corresponding class differentiation began to emerge within an overwhelmingly feudal society, and for a rather long period the bourgeoisie more or less shared power with the feudal lords.<sup>\*85</sup> It's true, on the other hand, to borrow a phrase, that there were "structural constraints" enforced by that same state that prevented full capitalist domination of society, and that it was ultimately necessary for the bourgeoisie to *smash* the feudal states in order for bourgeois relations to become qualitatively dominant within those societies.

But the "structural constraints" of capitalism are different. Revisionism to the contrary, the proletariat cannot "share power" or dig-in in the bourgeois state. For example, the state sector within capitalist society cannot be seen as some sort of potentially (or actually) socialist stronghold within capitalist society, as it is subordinate to and entirely conditioned by the dictates of the self-expansion of value. It is

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\* From the *Communist Manifesto*: "Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune; here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable 'third estate' of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semifederal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." [Note 85.]

this overall dominance of the law of value that marks a society as capitalist; once that is ascertained, analysis must then proceed on the basis of grasping the essential relationships of the various superstructural institutions to that operation.

But what about socialism? Socialist society is unique in that throughout its existence its economic base will simultaneously contain and generate economic relations characteristic of capitalism (e.g., exchange through money), socialism (e.g., payment for work) and communism (e.g., subbotniks). This will find expression in the socialist superstructure (more on this shortly), and for this reason alone it is a serious error not to apply “qualitatively different criteria” to the state in capitalist and socialist society.

The soil for capitalist relations within socialist society includes the differences (and inequalities) between mental and manual labor, between agriculture and industry, and between the city and the countryside; it also comprehends the continued operation of the law of value in a number of important spheres, including exchange through money, payment according to work and even significant sections of the ownership system. What happens to those relations—that is, whether their scope of operation is entrenched and expanded or struggled against and restricted is mainly fought out in the superstructure and must be carried through in the economic base. The soil for capitalist relations in the base finds expression in lines and policies which, if applied, broaden the sphere of those bourgeois relations. Those who fight for and implement those lines, at the top levels of the party, are the core of the bourgeoisie under socialism (and become the new bourgeois rulers if capitalism is restored). This sheds light on the irreducible importance of “what line leads” in every sphere of socialist society. Bourgeois lines in command mean the expansion of bourgeois relations and the strengthening of the bourgeoisie; proletarian lines, their restriction (and motion towards eventual elimination). All this has direct material implications.

The state becomes an arena for struggle between the proletariat and the new bourgeoisie generated within socialist society. Things are further complicated by the fact that ownership in socialist society (and overall direction of the economy) necessarily rests in the hands of the state. Thus as forces in positions of power and leadership espouse a bourgeois line—that is, a line representing the bourgeois relations in society (and finding support internationally in the existence of imperialism worldwide)—their authority becomes transformed “from leadership guiding the masses in revolution toward the goal of communism into oppression over the masses, forcing them back to capitalism—in the name, however, of ‘socialism’ and ‘communism.’”<sup>86</sup> Ownership in a sense changes hands in various units, elements of the superstructure including, very importantly, parts of the party) become neobourgeois strongholds, and different parts of the superstructure begin serving capitalism, not socialism.

At the same time, as long as the state is principally in the hands of the proletariat, as long as the overall line guiding society indeed serves the international proletarian revolution and fosters the transition to communism, society is socialist and the proletariat holds power in fact. This is not tautological; the real direction of any society purporting to be socialist can be analyzed and evaluated. As Bob Avakian wrote concerning the Soviet Union:

“This just takes us back to the fundamental question: what is commanding what, what is determining and regulating? Is commodity production, the law of value and surplus value in command, or are these things subordinate to and in the service of principles, policies and relations

that serve to move society toward a new stage where such things have been eliminated? Do these things dominate and lead to the reproduction, on an extended scale, of relations in which they are essential and regulating, or are they dominated by ‘calculations’ and a whole process of increasingly conscious mass decision making (and implementing) that (over any period of time) increasingly restricts and moves toward finally eliminating their role altogether? Can anyone argue that such things as the law of value, profit, etc., have diminished over, say, the last two or three decades in the USSR? On the contrary, everyone knows—and the Soviet apologists do not attempt to hide this, though they certainly do attempt to explain away its implications even while actually extolling the fact—that these ‘categories’ have assumed an increasing (and in fact a commanding) role.”<sup>87</sup>

The proletariat under socialism has going for it the proletarian headquarters in the party, the mass organizations, the sections of the state apparatus adhering to the revolutionary line, state ownership, and (again) the revolutionary direction of the economy overall, etc., as well as the highly important factor of other revolutionary struggles going on internationally. But it’s up against a bourgeoisie which is headquartered in the highest reaches of the party and the state apparatus, and which finds soil in the still fairly extensive bourgeois-type relations within the socialist society, in the international dominance of the bourgeoisie, and in the powerful force of habit of 5,000 years of class society.

Szymanski uses the concept of “structural constraints,” however, to imply that once state ownership and related practices are established, proletarian rule is more or less “locked in.” This is not only wrong, but extremely damaging: it’s wrong because the only thing the proletariat is “locked into” in socialism is continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat to transform the world into a communist one, and it’s damaging because the very act of telling the proletariat that its rule is guaranteed by all these so-called structural constraints tends to “lock” the working class itself into a state of political passivity.

The proletariat establishes its dictatorship to effect the (long and tortuous) transition to communism, and its superstructure must be fitted (and constantly re-fitted) to that task. This transition has to entail a narrowing of the division of labor in society, both in the base and in the superstructure, in which the masses are aroused to increasingly overcome what Marx called this “enslaving subordination.” This crucial point—the mobilization of the workers to increasingly assume the leadership over and actual direction of all spheres of society—does not reduce itself to Laibman’s assurances that the trade union leaders are staying on the ball, or Szymanski’s focus on the class origins of the Soviet leaders or the greater role of the militias; it means mass political struggle over cardinal questions before society, over society’s overall direction. Such struggle is both continuous and inevitably and periodically comes to a head in all-out battles between the proletariat and the (new) bourgeoisie to determine which class will in fact hold power and in which direction society will move. Both the continual revolutionization of society and the major leaps called forward by the exigencies of the class struggle (internationally and within the socialist country, and in their interpenetration) find institutional expression: at different junctures new organs of power, institutions, practices, etc., arise to carry forward and consolidate the transformations effected by the mass struggle in various spheres. And yes, a key characteristic of this process is changing the social composition of the organs of power and leading institutions in society to afford and reflect deeper and more conscious involvement of the masses themselves as a crucial part in breaking down the division of labor inherited from capitalist society.



But again, exactly because all these forms arise within the contradictory soil of socialist society, they can be utilized to fight for either restricting or expanding bourgeois relations; none is somehow immune to capital.

In a funny kind of way, Szymanski gives us both instrumentalism and instrumentalism inside out. In analyzing capitalism, he seems to see the capitalist state as an institution able to be seized and suborned by different sectors of the bourgeoisie. The voluntarism in this approach comes out in the notion that the ascendant bourgeois forces more or less blithely utilize the state to fill their pockets (after all, “don’t they care about their children?”). By substituting the sociological notion of the capitalist class for the Marxist-Leninist analysis of the laws governing the capitalist economic base (including their effects on and relative objectification in the class formation), he lays the basis for his detachment of the superstructure from the dynamics and imperatives of the economic base, and for the interrelated struggle on the higher and concentrated plane of politics.

But when he approaches socialist society, in which the latitude for the superstructure (and for consciousness generally) is far greater and qualitatively different, he utterly negates its initiative, its importance, and its ability to affect and transform the economic base. *Both* approaches share a mechanical view of the relation between base and superstructure.

The real relation, in any society, must be treated dialectically—that is, in a framework recognizing that they are mutually exclusive yet constantly interpenetrating, each conditioning and constantly transforming the existence of the other. The analysis of any society must be founded in the dynamics and contradictions of its economic base, and the content and significance of the various forms of the superstructure must be understood in terms of their generation from, interpenetration with, and reaction back on the base. But it’s not a one-way causal arrow in any case; the superstructure will at times be principal (e.g., during periods of revolution), and is extremely intertwined at all times with the base in the era of imperialism. As for socialist society, the dynamic role of the superstructure is qualitatively greater—while the base remains the foundation, the superstructure plays an initiating role, and the scope for human consciousness is unprecedented.

That is the leap humanity is currently fighting to make, and that is the leap which the Soviet bourgeoisie—like its U.S. counterparts—aims to suppress and prevent. And for that reason the Soviet bourgeoisie—again, with its Western counterparts—must be overthrown, repressed, and replaced by a genuine proletarian dictatorship.

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Behind all the talk of narrowing wage scales and institutional constraints there lies an apologia, a method, and a model for the future.

The apologia is for a society dominated by the capital relation, with that domination reflected in all its institutions. Its outer differences with the imperialist societies of the West are like distinctions between different kinds of dinosaurs—the astute student will take the wide variation fully into account without

losing sight of the basic generic unity. The petrification of the antagonistic division between rulers and ruled; the role of the state in fighting for and assuring favorable conditions for the accumulation of capital, internally and around the world; the military suppression of the oppressed nations and the preparation for a world war of redivision, resting on the use of nuclear weapons; and the reduction of the masses of workers to mere means for the self-expansion of value—all these are the rule in both the Soviet Union and the more classically capitalist powers. Apologetics for such a ruling class are apologetics for criminals.

The method is bourgeois sociology filtered through revisionism. Analysis of class origins replaces analysis of class relations, warmed-over elite theory (a little pink around the edges) is posed against the Leninist understanding of the state, and a retreat to nineteenth-century conditions of capitalism is set in opposition to the real dynamics of imperialism and the importance of the distinction between capitalism's two stages.

And the model society for the future? Not communism, not socialism, but what Raymond Lotta called “decapitated capitalism.” The class privileges and prerogatives of the petty bourgeoisie and other intermediate strata are to remain intact in this system, while the “irrational” institution of private ownership of the means of production will be brought under control of the state. Thoroughgoing revolution is out; the rule of the beneficial elite is in. And when the savior's mask inevitably turns back into the familiar visage of the capitalist (even if now a bureaucrat-capitalist), calculating profits and barking orders, sponsoring invasions and planning wars, the masses are assured it's all for their own good.

Soviet society in particular demands apologetics; nowhere is the gap between professed ideal and direct experience as chasm-like. Sophistry and hypocrisy are the stock in trade of defenders of a capitalism that dare not speak its name. It is on Marxists to take up the task of stripping away the mystification, preparatory to ripping up the social relations that generate and rely on it. And this task, in regard to the Soviet Union, must continue to deepen.

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<sup>1</sup> Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, “The ‘Tarnished Socialism’ Thesis, or the Political Economy of Soviet Social-Imperialism,” *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist? Essays Toward the Debate on the Nature of Soviet Society* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983), pp. 148-49.

<sup>2</sup> David Laibman, “The ‘State Capitalist’ and ‘Bureaucratic- Exploitative’ Interpretations of the Soviet Social Formation: A Critique,” *Essays Toward the Debate*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>3</sup> Laibman, “Interpretations of the Soviet Social Formation: A Critique,” p. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Collected Works (LCW)*, Volume 22 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), p. 205.

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 436, 438-39.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press [FLP], 1975), p. 90-91.

<sup>7</sup> See Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon, *America in Decline: An Analysis of the Developments Toward War and Revolution, in the U.S. and Worldwide, in the 1980s* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1984), pp. 120-23.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Szymanski, "The Red Flag Still Flies: Workers' Power in the USSR," *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist? Part II: The Question is Joined* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> See Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, *Charting the Uncharted Course* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1981), pp. 10-17.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of the concept of the national capital formation, see Lotta, *America in Decline*, pp. 117-19.

<sup>11</sup> Szymanski, "Soviet Socialism and Proletarian Internationalism," *Essays Toward the Debate*, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Laibman, "Interpretations of the Soviet Social Formation: A Critique," p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme, Selected Works of Marx and Engels [MESW]*, Vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), pp. 19-20.

<sup>14</sup> This series of quotes is from Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 593-95.

<sup>15</sup> See Murray Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union* (Armonk, N. Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1977), p. 9; Mervyn Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union* (London and Boston: Allen Unwin, 1978), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, p. 23. Szymanski maintains that this is also the income of economic ministers, though he provides no documentation for this assertion (see *The Question is Joined*, p. 88). Perhaps he views this as the general income level among higher government officials, In either case, he does not document his claim, nor are we aware of sources which could substantiate it.

<sup>17</sup> See Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> See Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Bob Avakian, "Some Thoughts on the Soviet Debate," unpublished paper, 1983, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> S. Dzarasov, "Economic Initiative and the Organization of Centralized Planning," *Problems of Economics*, December 1983, p. 92.

<sup>21</sup> See Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> See Lotta, "Realities of Social-Imperialism Versus Dogmas of Cynical Realism: The Dynamics of the Soviet Capital Formation," *The Question is Joined*. This outlines some of the necessities facing the Soviet capitalists.

<sup>23</sup> Szymanski, "Soviet Socialism and Proletarian Internationalism," p. 41; Robert Osborn, *Soviet Social Policies* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1970), pp. 259-60. Szymanski, in the same passage, also claims Osborn as evidence that there is not privileged access to automobiles or special stores. Osborn makes no such absurd claims. The chapter in Osborn's book that Szymanski cites (Chapter 6) does not deal with these issues at all but is concerned with size, planning, and investment inequalities among urban areas.

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<sup>24</sup> This and the following brief summary account of privileges are drawn from Hedrik Smith, *The Russians* (New York: Times Books, 1983), Chapter 1; Robert Kaiser, *Russia, the People and the Power* (1976), pp. 175-79; Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, Chapter 2; and Alistair McAuley, *Economic Welfare in the Soviet Union* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), pp. 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the Soviet Union during the Stalin era, see Avakian, *Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will*, published as *Revolution*, No. 50 (December 1981), pp. 17-29.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Hirszowicz, *The Bureaucratic Leviathan* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), pp. 115-17.

<sup>27</sup> See Yandwitch, "Review: Mervyn Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*," *Soviet Studies*, January 1980, pp. 160-61; McAuley, *Economic Welfare in the Soviet Union*, p. 67. Szymanski's attempt (see *The Question is Joined*, pp. 87-88) to compare this estimate of the lowest level of the Soviet income "elite" with the top levels of the U.S. ruling class is obviously silly.

<sup>28</sup> Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, p. 180.

<sup>29</sup> Roy Medvedev, *On Socialist Democracy* (New York: W W Norton, 1977), p. 224.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Goldfield and Melvin Rothenberg, *The Myth of Notes Capitalism Reborn* (Oakland: Line of March, 1980), p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> See Bruce Occeña and Irwin Silber, "Capitalism in the USSR? An Opportunist Theory in Disarray, Part I," *Line of March*, November/December 1980, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> Consumption per capita increased more rapidly in the USSR in the period 1955-70 than in the U.S. or Britain, but the Soviets were outpaced by such countries as Japan, West Germany, France, and Italy in the same period (Abram Bergson, *Productivity and the Social System—the USSR and the West* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978], p. 173). It is true that these trends have faltered with the development of crisis in the Western bloc, but similar trends can also be noted recently in the Soviet bloc, most starkly in Poland.

<sup>33</sup> For a summation of Soviet studies, see Alex Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?," *Problems of Communism*, November/December 1982.

<sup>34</sup> "It is the nature of the Soviet definition, measuring inequality by quantile boundaries, not quantile averages, that the impoverishment or enrichment of the top people will not normally be reflected in the decile ratio" (Alec Nove, "Income Distribution in the USSR: A Possible Explanation of Some Recent Data," *Soviet Studies*, April 1982, p. 288).

<sup>35</sup> Michael Ellman, "A Note on the Distribution of Earnings in the USSR Under Brezhnev," *Slavic Review*, December 1980, p. 670. The figure sometimes cited of 7.24 for 1946 has been shown by both Soviet and Western economists to be statistically unreliable and to drastically exaggerate inequality due to extensive rationing and other factors. Earlier figures are much lower. On this point, see also Peter Wiles, *Distribution of Income East and West* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1974), pp. xii-xiv.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Wiles, "Recent Data on Soviet Income Distribution," *Economic Aspects of Life in the USSR* (1975), p. 120. The decile ratio for the UK in 1966 was 3.4 "gross of a much heavier income tax. The British figure also includes agricultural workers, while Soviet figures exclude the lowly paid collective farm workers. Both of these factors would serve to make the British figure significantly more equal than the Soviet." The impact of various social services is unclear. However, even McAuley, who has investigated the subject extensively and is fairly sympathetic

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to the Soviets on the issue of social equality, concludes that “Existing institutions tend to reinforce as often as counteract existing social and sexual inequality” (McAuley, “Welfare and Social Security,” in Leonard Schapiro and Joseph Godson, eds., *The Soviet Worker* [New York: St. Martin, 1981], p. 227). See also McAuley, *Economic Welfare in the Soviet Union*, pp. 97, 287-88; Osborn, *Soviet Social Policies*, pp. 41, 50-51; and *Pravda*, “Is There a Soviet Working Class?”.

<sup>37</sup> See Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> McAuley, “Welfare and Social Security,” p. 214.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted by Ellman, “A Note on the Distribution of Earnings in the USSR Under Brezhnev,” p. 669.

<sup>40</sup> See David Dyker, “Planning and the Worker,” in Schapiro and Godson, eds., *The Soviet Worker*, p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Gregory Grossman, “The ‘Second Economy’ of the USSR,” *Problems of Communism*, September/October 1977, pp. 25-40.

<sup>42</sup> Szymanski, *The Question is Joined*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>43</sup> Laibman, *Essays Toward the Debate*, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Szymanski, *The Question is Joined*, p. 68.

<sup>45</sup> Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” MESW, Vol. 1, p. 424.

<sup>46</sup> Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Peking: FLP, 1970), pp. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Szymanski, *The Question is Joined*, p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Lenin, “Report to a Session of the All-Russian CEC” (April 29, 1918), LCW, Vol, 27, p. 300.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America?* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 16 and following; also Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

<sup>50</sup> Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, p. 126.

<sup>51</sup> Nove, “Is There a Ruling Class in the USSR?”, *Soviet Studies*, October 1975, p. 617. On this question see also, Peter Zwick, “An Aggregate Biographical Analysis of the Soviet Political Elite,” Doctoral Dissertation (Duke University, 1971), pp. 391-92; David Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State* (London and Boston: Allen Unwin, 1977), pp. 126-29; and Jerry Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1980), pp. 26, 68.

<sup>52</sup> From Bordanko’s *Steel Founders*, quoted in Vera Dunham, “The Waning Theme of the Worker as Hero in Recent Soviet Literature,” in Arcadius Kahan and Blair Ruble, eds., *Industrial Labor in the USSR* (Oxford, England: Pergamon, 1979), p. 408.

<sup>53</sup> Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, p. 64.

<sup>54</sup> See Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, p. 9. As part of the line of developing a new working class leadership and intelligentsia, in the early ’30s the proportion of workers and peasants enrolled in Soviet universities reached an

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all-time high of 72% of enrollment (Richard Dobson, "Education and Opportunity," in Jerry Pankhurst and Michael Sacks, eds., *Contemporary Soviet Society: Sociological Perspectives* [New York: Praeger, 1980], p. 116).

<sup>55</sup> Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, pp. 50, 58.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, three Soviet studies summarized in Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State*, pp. 207-11.

<sup>57</sup> Even those manual workers' children that do make it into college are drawn disproportionately from the more skilled workers. See summaries of the evidence of Soviet studies in Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?," pp. 12-13; and Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State*, p. 187.

<sup>58</sup> Smith, *The Russians*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>59</sup> Nove, "Income Distribution in the USSR," p. 288.

<sup>60</sup> Fridrikh Filippov, *Sotsiologiia obrazovaniia* [1980], p. 57.

<sup>61</sup> Szymanski, "Soviet Socialism and Proletarian Internationalism," p. 43.

<sup>62</sup> Avakian, "Some Thoughts on the Soviet Debate," pp. 11-13.

<sup>63</sup> See McAuley, *Economic Welfare in the Soviet Union*, p. 237.

<sup>64</sup> Comparisons are very rough, of necessity, due to limited availability of statistics and problems in the comparability of occupational classifications. Wiles gives British and Soviet figures that suggest a larger Soviet gap (Wiles, "Recent Data on Soviet Income Distribution," p. 121). McAuley finds the Soviet difference "rather less than would be found in the UK" without allowing for income tax—nor does he cite British figures (McAuley, *Economic Welfare in the Soviet Union*). Granick finds the differential roughly the same before tax—after tax the Soviet differential is more unequal (David Granick, *Managerial Comparisons of Four Developed Countries: France, Britain, United States and Russia* [1972], p. 264).

<sup>65</sup> Richard Carson, "Property Rights," in Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Carl Beck, eds., *Comparative Socialist Systems* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), pp. 325-26.

<sup>66</sup> Granick, *Managerial Comparisons*, pp. 197, 245.

<sup>67</sup> Szymanski, *Essays Toward the Debate*, p. 46.

<sup>68</sup> Theodore Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 130.

<sup>69</sup> Szymanski, *Essays Toward the Debate*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>70</sup> Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, LCW, Vol. 23, p. 117.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Marta Harnecker, *Cuba: Dictatorship or Democracy* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1980).

<sup>72</sup> Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, See "The 'Tarnished Socialism' Thesis," Introduction, pp. 135-53.

<sup>73</sup> Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, p. 34; Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?," p. 19.

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<sup>74</sup> See David Lane and Felicity O'Dell, *The Soviet Industrial Worker* (New York: St. Martin, 1978), p. 35; Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?"

<sup>75</sup> Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?", p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Iu V. Arutiunian, "Socio-Economic Foundations of Group Differences," translated and reprinted in Murray Yanowitch and Wesley Fisher, translators and eds., *Social Stratification and Mobility in the USSR* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1973), pp. 113-14.

<sup>77</sup> Cited in Lane and O'Dell, *The Soviet Industrial Worker*, p. 36.

<sup>78</sup> Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, p. 152.

<sup>79</sup> Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, p. 155.

<sup>80</sup> V. Chkhikvadze, *The State, Democracy and Legality*, referred to in Medvedev, *On Socialist Democracy*, p. 261.

<sup>81</sup> Natalia Malkhovskaya, quoted in "Marxist-Leninist Resistance *Inside* the USSR," *Women and Revolution*, Spring 1981; see also *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 135 (December 18, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> Szymanski, *Essays Toward the Debate*, p. 54.

<sup>83</sup> Szymanski, *Essays Toward the Debate*, p. 50-51.

<sup>84</sup> Szymanski, *The Question is Joined*, p. 32.

<sup>85</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, MESW, Vol. 1, pp. 110-11.

<sup>86</sup> Revolutionary Communist Party, *New Programme and New Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party* (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1981), p. 112.

<sup>87</sup> Avakian, "Some Thoughts on the Soviet Debate," pp. 6-7.