THE CAPITALIST REALITY AND THE «SOCIETY OF WELL-BEING FOR ALL»

by L. ÇUÇI

The great socio-economic inequality that exists in the bourgeois-revisionist world today clearly shows that the oppressive and exploitative nature of capitalism not only does not change but, on the contrary, grows deeper with each passing day. The ever greater exploitation and the impoverishment of the proletariat resulting from it, and, on their basis, their discontent, play a very important role in the preparation of the objective conditions for the overthrow of capitalism through the socialist revolution. In this way, the Marxist theory on the impoverishment of the proletariat is an ideological weapon in the hands of the working class in the class struggle for the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society.


In these conditions the monopoly bourgeoisie and its reformist and revisionist stooges labour in vain to oppose their socio-economic concepts, their view of the perspective development of human society in the future, to the Marxist-Leninist ideas. The bourgeois-revisionist science tries to coin the most suitable names for the new social order which is allegedly replacing capitalism, such as for example «popular capitalism», «industrial society», «society of general well-being», etc. These ideologists try to implant in the minds of the working masses, who have revolted against the savage capitalist oppression and exploitation, the idea that they can allegedly solve the problem that worry them within the framework of the reformed capitalist order.

This propaganda capitalizes on some aspects of an organizational character of the development of productive forces which have brought about changes in the organization of the socio-economic...
order which, in turn, in their opinion, can be carried out within the framework of the capitalist relations of production, without affecting them. The relatively high-rate increase of labour productivity due to the technical and scientific revolution, the great and rapid concentration of capital and, on this basis, the development of state monopoly capitalism, the changes appearing in the consumption structure of the proletariat, etc. — all this has given a fresh impulsion to the development of the productive forces in recent years. But while there is a notable material development of the social product, the social base of this development — the capitalist relations of production, remains the same and is increasingly hampering the development of the productive forces. The contradictions of capitalism, instead of being toned down, as the bourgeois-revisionist ideologists hoped, have been further exacerbated. The only thing the proletariat stands to gain from this development is increased oppression and poverty, misery and unemployment, which make an ever deeper imprint in its life.

THE GROWTH OF CAPITALIST PRODUCTION AND THE INCREASED DEMANDS OF THE WORKING MASSES

Beginning with the 50's, important changes occurred in the economic structure of the imperialist countries. As a result of the operation of the objective laws of capitalism and change of the ratio of forces in the world, the process of capitalist reproduction underwent notable changes. The technical-scientific revolution, connected with the application of modern physics and chemistry, with the specialization and automatization of production and with the introduction of advanced technology into production, became the basis of this revolution. However, it raised the demand for new plants and machinery, stimulated the production of the means of production, increased the need for new capital and, at the same time, stepped up the virtual consumption of the existing capital. The massive renewal of fundamental capital on this basis was followed by the vigorous development of new branches of the economy and stepped up the development of the productive forces.

However, the growth and development of the productive forces required more than the development of the means of production alone. It required the development of the producers themselves, as an absolutely necessary element. The technical-scientific revolution, with its high-rate development, has raised the demand for a qualitative improvement of the work force, for it to adapt itself to an overload of complex and immediate changes in the process of production, to acquire new skills and habits. The modern systems of production in the capitalist countries cannot function without a high qualitative level of the work force.

The work in the developed capitalist countries today entails not only tense nerves and attention on the part of the worker, but also great resistance to monotony. As such, it has brought about the manifestation of new forms of fatigue, which cannot fail to lead to a demand for better food and longer hours of more active rest. The great tension at work, combined with the increased intensity of work, without an adequate increase of consumption, leads to a rapid decrease of the work capability of workers. But this also affects the interests of the employers, because it causes a fall of productivity, waste, damage of machinery and equipment, increased traumatization and professional diseases, which make themselves felt in the amount of profit and the general effectiveness of production. At the same time, this is a source of tense relations between labour and capital. The difficult conditions of work are some of the main causes of the powerful strikes and mass protest movements of the working masses in the capitalist world.

On the other hand, the complex mechanism and automation of production brought signal changes in the qualification of wage-earners. The number of engineers, technicians, employees, highly skilled workers, of those operating complex apparatuses involved in production, has increased and, consequently, that of low qualification workers has decreased. The rise of the qualitative level of the work force, on the whole, cannot fail to reflect itself in the volume of means of livelihood consumed and in the conditions necessary for their reproduction. However, high qualification cannot be attained without raising the educational level, without improving the conditions of living, without extending the health service, etc.

For these reasons the bourgeoisie began to show more care for man and his capability for work. Of course, this has nothing to do with humanitarianism or love for man on its part, it merely shows that the role of the work force in social production is becoming ever more important and decisive in the conditions of the technical-scientific revolution.

It is clear that the development of production and the whole society, along with the accumulation of material wealth, also entails the build-up of man's capability for work. Marx called this process the primary accumulation of wealth, the most important result of preceding work which exists only in live work, that is, in the work force.

In keeping with these teachings of Marxism-Leninism it is essential to point out that the factors which increase the value of the work force have greater importance today. Increased intensification of work, increased requirement for the education and qualification of working people, as well as changes in the structure of hired labour, all this has increased the range of demands for a normal living on the part of the working people and have raised the value of the work force. On the other hand, the successes of the
working people in their struggle against the capitalists, which have been achieved through stern class struggles, lead to increased demands for better conditions of living, to the widening of the range of claims of the proletariat, which, combined with other factors, bring about the raising of the value of the work force.

Lenin stresses with particular emphasis that the working people can preserve and develop their capability for work only if they have the maximum of their free time, otherwise, if they lack the necessary things and blessings, they are not in a position to consume them in a specific manner, that is, to increase their capability for work.

At present, in most developed capitalist countries the workday has been reduced and holidays for certain categories of working people have been extended. Thus, in various branches of the industry of the United States, they apply the 39-hour week, in France 41 hours, in Japan 40.8 hours, in Britain 42 hours, etc, etc.

This they do out of necessity, because it is observed that in the conditions of the extreme intensification of work under modern automation of production, labour productivity in the last hours of the working day or towards the week-end falls sharply, and this negatively affects the profits of the capitalist. The bourgeoisie knows which side its bread is buttered, it calculates that, in the conditions of modern production, for the worker to work through all his workday with high productivity he must have free time sufficient for the normal reproduction of his working force. However, emphasis must be put on the fact that the bourgeoisie reached this conclusion only after long and bloody battles by the proletariat.

But this extension of the leisure, as a result of changes in the conditions of work and the struggle of the working class, is also a factor which impels the working people to make new demands for consumer goods and better services, such as, for example, TV sets, wireless sets, musical instruments, cultural services, etc, as well as such goods and services which help extend their free time, like electro-domestic appliances, more rapid transport facilities, etc.

Another phenomenon in the socio-economic life in capitalism, which leads to increased demands on the part of the working people, is also the shortage or insufficient development of urban transport facilities and the costly fare. This causes the demand for personal means of transport, including automobiles which often become absolutely necessary, to increase. The demand for more and more rapid means of transport is also determined by the professional mobility of the worker, which, on its part, is linked with the technical and scientific progress. More often than not the workers are obliged to seek work dozens of kilometres away from their living quarters.

This phenomenon is evident from the great spread of electric and electronic means through which most of general information about jobs and conditions of work, advertisements, programs of raising the qualification level of workers, etc is given or taken. Rapid and correct information cannot exist without this equipment.

In this manner, the process of the emergence of new demands and the necessity of meeting, at least, part of them depends on objective factors of the socio-economic development. In the final analysis, this process is closely linked with the development of production and the principal component of the productive forces – the work force. With the development of production, the work force, as an element of historical and moral value gains a new dimension, requirements change and grow and, together with them, the idea of the means to cope with them. A new social measure to assess the requirements emerges among the working people, and along with this new incen-

THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION LOWERS THE POSSIBILITIES OF MEETING WORKERS' DEMANDS

Analysing the capitalist mode of production, Marx reached the conclusion that the impoverishment of the proletariat, in its absolute and relative form, is an objective phenomenon which stems from the very nature of the capitalist order and the operation of the economic laws which characterize it. This phenomenon is, in the first place, a direct result of the operation of the fundamental economic law of capitalism – the law of surplus value and the general law of capitalist accumulation, which leads to the impoverishment of the working masses, the constant lowering of their standard of living.

As is known the economic situation of the working masses and the working class is determined by the conditions of work and living. Wages, the degree of intensity of work and the length of the workday, unemployment, prices for broad consumer goods, conditions of housing and rents, taxes and fees, etc – all combined together determine the standard of living of the working masses in general. Therefore, for a correct assessment of the condition and impoverishment of the masses, these factors should be analysed in interaction and in close connection with each other. Alteration of one of these factors is reflected on the economic condition of the working masses.

Higher wages condition the raising of the purchasing power of the working masses and, as a consequence, the increasing of the volume of consumption, bringing about an improvement of its structure. In particular periods of development of the capitalist economy, as a result of the fierce class struggle, in
order to avert the revolt of the masses the bourgeoisie is obliged to make some partial and temporary concession by increasing the nominal wages of workers. However, this is not directly translated into a rise in the standard of living, because the amount of wages is, really, one of the indices of this standard, but it is intricately connected with the degree of intensification of work, the level of unemployment, prices, etc. If nominal wages over a certain period of time show some increase, the capitalists intensify the work in order to avoid a reduction in their profits. This, on its part, creates the need for the worker to consume additional amounts of food in order to replace his energies. But with the level of his wages the worker cannot ensure this, especially in the conditions in which the average annual rate of increase of prices for broad consumer goods goes constantly up. If in 1955 the average annual rate of increase of prices was 1.5 per cent in all the Western countries, in 1965 it went up to 4.9 per cent, and in 1975 - 15 per cent. Only in the period from September 1979 to August 1980 the average rate of the increase of prices for consumer goods was 12.7 per cent. For individual states the figures run as follows: the United States of America - 12.8 per cent, Britain - 16.3 per cent, Italy - 22 per cent, France - 13.6 per cent, Canada and Australia - 10.7 per cent, etc.

Apart from galloping prices, high rents and various taxes, the higher charges for socio-cultural services, etc are an additional burden on the working masses of the capitalist and revisionist countries. All these factors have brought about such an increase in the cost of living that the real wages of the working people have fallen notably. This phenomenon is apparent in the USA, Britain, Italy and other countries. As the Ministry of Labour of the United States informs, with his present real income, the average American worker cannot afford to buy all the goods and pay for all the socio-cultural services as he did in 1965. Last year, as against the preceding year, the real income of the American worker has fallen an average of 3 per cent. In Britain real wages have fallen 7 per cent in 1977, as against 1970, in Italy there was a fall of 7 per cent for the same period, etc.

This reality shows that in the present conditions of capitalism the level of fulfilment of the essential requirements for the reproduction of the work force goes on decreasing, as against the degree of development of the productive forces and the possibilities created by science and social production. In the background of the exacerbation of antagonistic contradiction between the essential requirements for the reproduction of the work force, which objectively go on increasing, and the low level of their fulfilment, that is, of the real wages, the gap between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie continues to grow wider.

The trend towards the widening of this gap stems, among other things, also from the high unemployment. In the beginning of the 60's the apologists of capitalism trumpeted that as a result of technical progress, the day was dawning when the word «unemployment» would be forgotten and remain a term belonging only to history. This euphoria was based on the technical and scientific revolution as a result of which new factories, plants and production lines began to be opened and there was a great demand for the work force. But history was quick to deny these predictions. The inner laws of the capitalist economy, spontaneity, anarchy and unrestrained competition became a more destructive force. Not only single enterprises, but whole branches based on outdated technology, were smashed, thus creating the so-called «technological unemployment». As a consequence, unemployment not only was not relegated to the past, but, on the contrary, turned into a chronic ailment of capitalist society, affecting millions of skilled and unskilled workers, even specialists.

As comes out from the bourgeois statistics themselves, unemployment in the countries of the European Common Market has reached an all-high in their history. The same gloomy picture is looming large in the other capitalist countries. The United States today has about 9.2 million unemployed who will soon reach the 11 million mark. Britain, France, Italy and Japan, with 2 million jobless people each, are not better off, either.

In this manner, the technical or scientific revolution did not heal the ulcers of capitalism, nor could it do so. On the contrary, it showed that technical progress, the development of the productive forces, in general, is above all a further sophistication of the ways and means for the exploitation of the working class. Mechanization and automation of production, on the one hand, eliminate many professions, while, on the other, create and increase the demand for new professions which call for higher training and qualification. However, this qualification and requalification of workers, which follows as a result of the changes of the workplaces and professions, is bound to bring about a reduction in the nominal and real wages of working people, hence also the lowering of their standard of living. In this case, too, the only thing the proletariat stands to gain is the stepping up of capitalist oppression and exploitation.

Apart from this, the technical-scientific revolution defied the allegations of the modern revisionists who ignore the Marxist theory on the impoverishment of the proletariat in capitalism. In their words, the workers live better today than in the past, because a broad range of consumer goods has been made available for their daily use and that the increase of production and national income brings about an increased share of the population, including the proletariat, in the consumption.

Marxism-Leninism does not deny the fact that with the growth of production and national income,
the amount of the goods consumed by the working masses and the proletariat increases, too. This is also borne out by the capitalist reality. The worker of the time of Marx had not the needs and demands of his counterpart of today. Indeed, even from the standpoint of the fulfillment of these needs the worker of today stands at a higher level. And this because in the value of the work force, considered as a commodity, historical and moral elements are also included. If in the present-day conditions of development of the productive forces and with the present requirements of capitalist production the mass consumer goods and the standards of the past century were to be employed for the replacement of the energies spent by the workers, the work force would not reproduce itself normally. Therefore, for it to reproduce itself, which is in the interest of capital, it must consume more. This, however, does not mean that the impoverishment of the proletariat has ceased, on the contrary, is increasing with each passing day, because the capitalist mode of production constantly lowers the possibility for the working masses, in general, and the proletariat, in particular, to fulfill their requirements. The law of the absolute and relative impoverishment of the working masses and the proletariat rests precisely on the constant decrease of this possibility as against the requirements.

Besides, as the reality shows, the increase of capitalist production and national income have not led, nor could they lead, in the future, to the raising of the standard of living of the working masses but, on the contrary, to the ever greater enrichment of the capitalists, to the increase of their parasitic consumption. To admit that the level of consumption and the standard of living of the working class have been raised, as the modern revisionists do, means to ignore the antagonistic contradictions of capitalist reproduction and, in particular, the contradiction between production and consumption. The great frequency and constant aggravation of economic crises, especially the recent crisis which began in 1974 and continues to this day, prove that this contradiction not only has not disappeared but, on the contrary, has been further exacerbated.

All this shows that the economic and political struggle of the working class today is a just struggle, that the demands of the proletariat for higher wages and better conditions of living are just demands arising from an objective basis. However, the proletariat must not forget that in capitalism the economic struggle cannot wipe out poverty, cannot liquidate unemployment and the tendency of the real wages to fall. No economic struggle can liquidate the economic laws of capitalism. And this because the antagonistic contradiction between the essential demands of the workers for the normal reproduction of their capability for work and the low level of their real fulfillment has its basis in the exploitative character of the capitalist relations of production, in the private ownership of the means of production by the bourgeoisie. The solution of this contradiction is achieved with the destruction of the capitalist relations through the violent proletarian revolution.

THE POLARIZATION OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY IS DEEPENED FURTHER

Marxism-Leninism teaches that in the class analysis of society the relationship of people to the ownership of the means of production is a primary element, because the distribution of the means of production precedes all production and creates the premises for it. «The basic element,» says Comrade Enver Hoxha, «which determines a social system is the ownership of the means of production. If the ownership of the means of production is private, then we have to do with a system in which man exploits man, in which wealth is accumulated in the hands of the minority at one pole, while the overwhelming majority of the people live in poverty and want at the other pole.» (Enver Hoxha, «Eurocommunism is Anti-communism», p. 135, Alb. ed.) The social structure of the modern capitalist society is shifting precisely in the direction Marxism has predicted. Along with the development of capitalism, work is more and more being transformed into hired labour, and the means of production into capital. The changes following in the wake of the technical and scientific revolution in the class structure of society have further increased the number of wage-earners. The capitalist reality proves that the modern bourgeoisie-revisionist society not only is not being proletarianized but, on the contrary, is constantly being proletarianized, and the role of the mass of workers in production is becoming more and more decisive. If in 1850 in the developed capitalist countries the hired labourers made up 68.7 per cent of the employed population, in 1960 they represented 74.4 per cent, and in 1977 more than 85 per cent of the employed population.

This great degree of proletarianization of the present-day bourgeoisie-revisionist society has exacerbated to the extreme the antagonistic contradictions of capitalism. The revolts, strikes and demonstrations of a political and economic character of the working masses against oppression and exploitation, as well as against the reactionary cliques in power, have become mass phenomena in all the developed and undeveloped capitalist and revisionist countries. Millions of proletarians, small producers, intellectuals, young people, students, etc. are fighting on the barricades of the class struggle today. Thus, in 1971-1979 430 million people took part in strikes and political manifestations against 273 million in the period 1967-1970.

These large-scale revolutionary movements of the working masses have impelled the bourgeoisie to go over to savage and violent suppression of them,
while at the same time indulging in a demagogy unprecedented in history. By means of the modern mass media and publicity, the bourgeois-revisionist propaganda tries to divert the working people from the revolutionary struggle, to allure them with 'new commodities', to restrict their horizon within the narrow circle of material consumption and to impose the ideology of «the mass consumer society» and «the society of general well-being» on them.

The main aim of this propaganda is to estrange the million-strong masses from the acute socio-political problems and involve them in petty everyday struggles to attain the relative «standard» of consumption. Competition for the buying of goods does not allow them the time and energy for other, higher interests. Monopoly capital tries by all manner of means to deprive people of the true aim in life and lead them to degeneration and bemusement. Standardization, orientation towards the average consumer, social tastes, etc. — this is the content of the goods the «bourgeois industry» turns out on a massive scale in order to exploit the poverty and want of the working people.

But while this propaganda tries to cover up poverty with the illusory smoke of «well-being for all» the reality defies it everyday, the poverty and want for the majority, on one hand, and the enrichment of the minority, on the other, have become undeniable phenomena of the capitalist-revisionist world. Thus, official statistics from the United States have it that 1.6 per cent of the population takes the lion’s share of the national income — by owning more than 60 per cent of capitalist property, 30 per cent of shares and 100 per cent of bonds. At a time when 30 million people live in the poverty level in this country, the net profits of the American corporations have gone on increasing from one year to the other. If in 1960 the monopolies made a net profit of 24.9 billion dollars, in 1976 their profit rose to 81.8 billion dollars and in 1979 went up to over 100 billion dollars. In the Federal Republic of Germany a small number of rich families, at the head of which stand 18 multi-millionaires such as Krupp, Wolf, Opel, Grundig, etc. own about half the productive capital of the country, at a time when 7 million families can hardly earn a livelihood. The situation is the same in the other developed capitalist countries such as France, Italy, Britain, Japan, etc.

The polarization of the capitalist-revisionist society is more apparent in the countries dependent and semi-dependent on imperialism. The working classes and the working class of these countries are subject to a twofold oppression — both by the local bourgeoisie and the imperialist bourgeoisie. In these countries, in which the overwhelming majority of the world population lives, about 1.5 billion people live on the verge of starvation. In the first half of the 60's, 30-40 million people died each year of starvation or malnutrition. This figure is 4-5 times higher than that of those killed each year of the Second World War.

The great socio-economic inequality that exists in the bourgeois-revisionist world today clearly shows that the oppressive and exploitative nature of capitalism not only does not change but, on the contrary, grows deeper with each passing day. The ever greater exploitation and the impoverishment of the proletariat resulting from it and, on their basis, their discontent, play a very important role in the preparation of the objective conditions for the overthrow of capitalism through the socialist revolution. In this way, the Marxist theory on the impoverishment of the proletariat is an ideological weapon in the hands of the working class in the class struggle for the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society.