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ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
GREAT
OCTOBER
SOCIALIST
REVOLUTION

**October, Africa and National
Liberation**

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MODERN WORLD HISTORY began on November 7th, 1917 (October 25th according to the old Russian calendar) when the working people of Russia, organised in their Soviets and led by Lenin's Bolshevik Party, took power into their own strong hands and ended for ever the rule of the capitalists and landlords in this vast territory, covering one-sixth of the land surface of the earth.

The Great October Socialist Revolution was like a mighty explosion, shaking the edifice of imperialism to its very foundations, opening up

vast cracks in that structure of oppression, mass slaughter, brutal exploitation and misery—cracks through which the oppressed and toiling millions of the earth could for the first time discern the clear sky of their hopes for a future of freedom and human dignity. And the thunderous reverberations of that explosion have continued, with ever-increasing power, to echo through the corridors of history over the past fifty years.

I

To the teeming millions in the vast continental areas of colonial domination, oppressed by a double yoke of exploitation and national oppression, and to their liberation movements, the October Revolution had a most profound significance.

It meant that the handful of imperialist super-powers which had hitherto dominated the whole world, rudely seizing African and Asian countries by force of arms, ruling them from far-off European capitals by terror, looting their wealth and enslaving their inhabitants, no longer stood unchallenged. On the ruins of the tsarist empire, a new, socialist state had arisen, whose voice was raised immediately against the innumerable crimes of the imperialists, and whose vast potential strength, mobilised and harnessed with incredible speed by the new system of socialism, was soon to overcome the heritage of backwardness and advance the Soviet Union to the front ranks among the world powers. For the first time ever a great power, armed with all the resources of the most advanced technology, appeared not as the conqueror and exploiter, but as the loyal friend and defender of the world's outcasts, the hundreds of millions with bare feet and bent backs, who toil from dawn to sunset to scratch a meagre living from the soil with wooden hoes, whose children never learn to read and write, and who go to an early grave in lands ruled by foreigners.

To all of these, the new power born in 1917 spelt hope. They may not have had the opportunity to study the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin—the colonial masters took good care to see that they had no such opportunities. But the whole world was to see that in the regions of Tsarist Russia—that notorious prison of nations—the Communists abolished national oppression. The Soviet government not only proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination and independence, but put that principle into immediate practice. The former colonies of the Russian empire were liberated, and where they voluntarily opted to join the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the most energetic and generous steps were taken by the Russian proletariat, now masters of their country for the first time, to establish in the Asian territories and other areas of backwardness, that powerful economic and industrial

development which alone can ensure true independence and national equality.

Among the oppressed colonised peoples this unprecedented and magnificent example had, both directly and indirectly, a shattering impact. It transformed our national liberation movements, both quantitatively and qualitatively. From rather small bodies of a reformist type, dominated by bourgeois intellectuals, and pleading for rather limited demands and rights, they grew into mass movements, demanding full independence and the complete liquidation of the colonial system, fighting militant battles with a real prospect of victory. And that powerful impetus, though it may have ebbed and flowed at different periods, has never halted. On the contrary it has gone from strength to strength, until today all of Asia and nearly all of Africa has won at least constitutional independence.

To this great historical advance of the oppressed peoples, the October Revolution made a contribution of incalculable significance. The Soviet state not only challenged the evil practices of imperialism and colonialism and set a glorious example of fraternal relations between nations, both within the Soviet Union and abroad. It also—more and more as its strength and influence grew—rendered practical and concrete aid to the cause of national liberation.

Of course, revolution cannot be 'exported' and every people has the inescapable task of conquering its own freedom. But to those who were prepared to fight and themselves did fight, the Soviet Union has always rendered whatever aid was within its capacity. In the early days, still suffering the wounds of foreign intervention, imperialist blockades and civil war, it aided young national states as was the case with Mongolia and Turkey. The people of Africa will never forget the stern Soviet warnings which restrained the imperialists at the time of the Suez aggression and the Zanzibar revolution, or the backing given to the Aswan project and in many other fields. Nor will the world ever forget the all-out aid being given today to the heroic people of Vietnam, whose glorious resistance to American aggression is the cause of all humanity.

II

If, prior to 1917, the development of socialist ideas among the colonial peoples was limited, this was due, in no small measure, to the hypocritical and treacherous attitude of the leaders of the majority of the European Social Democratic Parties. With pious phrases of socialism and internationalism on their lips, they nevertheless condoned, or even supported, the innumerable crimes of their bourgeois masters in the colonies. For them, the 'national question' was confined to European nations or minorities, and even there they adopted com-

promising attitudes, like that of the British Labour Party towards the issue of Irish independence. Only Lenin and a small group of genuine internationalists persistently raised the demand for colonial liberation as the main issue regarding the national question.

Like their successors of today, these pre-war heroes of the Second International represented a section of the workers who were bribed by a share in the ill-gotten super-profits of colonial exploitation, became supporters of imperialism and corrupted by its disgusting ideology of racialism. Small wonder that they found few adherents among the oppressed nations, and none to mourn the inglorious collapse of the Second International that followed the disgraceful betrayal of nearly all its leaders who supported their imperialist governments in the First World War.

But these traitors did not speak for the whole of the socialist movement, by any means. In nearly every country there were groups who, even in the midst of the war, stood by the principles of revolutionary Marxism that had been abandoned by their leaders, and held aloft the banner of internationalism, peace and socialism.

Under the impact of the October Revolution, these groups and parties were consolidated and united to form parties of a new type, Communist Parties adhering to the Leninist principles of internationalism.

In the countries of advanced capitalism the Communist Parties showed in practice the meaning of genuine Marxism, genuine internationalism, in innumerable magnificent demonstrations of solidarity with the oppressed colonial peoples. We shall never forget the fight of the French Communists against the 'dirty wars' conducted by their imperialist government in Algeria and elsewhere, the splendid record of the Communist Party of Great Britain in opposing colonialism, from the days of India's struggles for independence to the British Government's present betrayal of the Zimbabwe people, the stand of the illegal Italian Communist Party against Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, or the outstanding campaigns by the Communist Party of the U.S.A. against the atrocious and criminal war to colonise Vietnam.

Through such noble campaigns of solidarity these Parties strengthened the ties of common struggle by the European and North American workers and the colonial masses against the common enemy—imperialism. These ties were further strengthened by the campaigns waged by the Communists in the metropolitan countries to end race-discrimination against colonial workers and students living there, and many other fraternal activities which raised still higher the influence of Marxism-Leninism and helped to counter the ceaseless assault of anti-Communist lies and slanders—a part of the imperialists' plan for the mental enslavement of the African and Asian people, whose poisonous

after-effects are still being felt even in this period of independence and national rebirth. Communist books, periodicals and theoretical journals published in the metropolitan countries increasingly penetrated the iron curtain of bans and censorship erected by the colonialists in the countries they had enslaved.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the ideas which inspired the October Revolution, the ideas of Communism, should more and more exert a magnetic influence on the most ardent patriots, the most militant workers and revolutionary intellectuals in the colonies and semi-colonies. Defying the ruthless repression and terror of the alien authorities and their indigenous agents, they came together in Marxist circles and groups, applied the science of historical materialism to the study and analysis of their own countries' struggles and problems. Thus were laid the foundations of Parties of a New Type, Communist Parties, in a great many colonial countries. These Parties were a tremendous asset to the nations striving for freedom.

If at first some of the leaders of the national liberation movements looked askance at their development, fearing they would be a source of organisational division, or of ideological diversion from the immediate struggle for independence—and we should admit that in some cases inexperience led to sectarian mistakes which strengthened these fears—nevertheless experience was to demonstrate to all honest patriots that the reverse was the truth. The Communists threw themselves unreservedly into the struggles for national liberation, recognising that before they can embark on the socialist path the oppressed people must first be masters in their own houses. Their advanced theoretical understanding, their love for and closeness to the toiling masses, and their revolutionary militance and preparedness for sacrifice, placed them in the front ranks of the sons of the soil fighting for national freedom. Communist participation helped accentuate the anti-imperialist trend of the national liberation movements.

Patriots of all shades of opinion had to recognise that the fact of a man's being a Communist makes him a better fighter for the liberation of his people; that the existence of a Communist Party is a source of added strength and unity, for among all oppressed peoples the Party will strive for a firm fighting front of national unity in the common struggle; that the theoretical training of the Marxist-Leninists gives an added dimension of perception to the liberation struggle, strengthening its strategy and tactics, and broadening its outlook from the limits of nationalism to the glorious perspectives of socialism and the militant unity of the workers and oppressed peoples of the entire world.

Lenin prophesied that the working class movement in the developed capitalist countries and the national liberation movement of the

hundreds of millions of oppressed colonial peoples would inevitably merge into a single mighty stream of world revolution.

The victory of the October Revolution and all its far-reaching consequences have fully vindicated that brilliant prediction. This is the guarantee of the final defeat of imperialism and the advance of all humanity to a better future.

III

Of epoch-making significance to the oppressed colonial peoples—as to the world as a whole—was the defeat of the Axis powers in the Second World War; a crushing victory in which the main part was played by the Socialist Soviet Union.

Fascist Germany and Italy were the world centres of infection of virulent theories and practices of racialism, gross national oppression and genocide. The paranoiac concept of the 'Herrenvolk' with its rabid fanning of hatred and contempt towards Africans, Asians, Jews and all allegedly 'inferior races' called forth an eager response among the bitterest enemies of human freedom and dignity everywhere—from the Ku Klux Klan in America, the traitor generals in Spain and the quislings of all Europe, to the chauvinist white supremacists in South Africa.

The heroic, resolute resistance of the Soviet people, led by their Communist Party, against Hitler's huge war machine aroused tremendous enthusiasm throughout the world, sweeping away encrusted layers of anti-communist prejudice assiduously cultivated by the bourgeoisie over many decades. The myth of Nazi invincibility was dispelled. A tremendous wave of resistance, of revolutionary energy, was released, culminating not only in the crushing of the Axis powers, but also, on the ruins of their short-lived empires, the construction of democracies of a new type in a number of countries.

In *Europe*, following national liberation, the people rejected the bourgeois parties whose leaders had sold them into servitude under the alien yoke, and created new states which have joined the Soviet Union in a socialist commonwealth.

In *Asia*, an irresistible tide of liberation swept the entire vast Continent in a series of struggles, often waged with arms in hand, which liquidated the huge colonial empires of Britain, France and Holland, put an end to the semi-colonial status of countries like China, and resulted in the establishment of states of national independence, some firmly committed to the socialist path, throughout this region with its enormous populations. Of particularly great importance for the development of the national liberation movement in Asia was the victory of the Chinese people.

In *Central and South America* and the *Caribbean*, whose nineteenth century revolutions against Iberian colonialism had largely been aborted and cut short by the influence of the biggest imperialist powers and by an alliance of local feudalists and capitalists and Yankee imperialism, a fresh impetus arose, reaching its culmination in the birth of Free Cuba, pioneer of Socialism in the Americas.

In our beloved *Africa*, country after country wrested its independence from the British, French and Belgian colonialists—sometimes, as in Algeria and Kenya, only after long and bloody battles—until, at the time of writing only the ‘slave South’—the fascist Republic of South Africa and its illegally annexed colony of South-West Africa, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), the Portuguese-occupied territories of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea, remained as substantial areas overtly dominated by European countries or racist white minorities. Everywhere else the African countries enjoy at least formal political independence, and in a number of our countries patriotic leaders have advanced yet further to the winning of economic independence and the laying of the foundations for the edifice of socialism—in the last analysis our only way to realise our people’s aspirations for true independence, equality among the nations and the redressing of centuries of injustice.

All these marvellous advances, which would scarcely have seemed possible even to the most optimistic fifty years ago, have been facilitated to a tremendous degree by the famous victory of October 1917, and all that it implied. No less has our path been illuminated by the practical experience of the Soviet State in the years that followed the Revolution. The October Revolution and the epochal events connected with it—the growth of the might and influence of the USSR, the defeat of fascism, the emergence and development of the socialist world system—vastly contributed to the rise of the African revolution and accelerated the advance of our peoples.

IV

Before the establishment of the first workers’ and peasants’ government in 1917, there were many who acknowledged the unfairness and evils of capitalism but who nevertheless doubted the feasibility of any other form of modern society.

The great achievement of Lenin and his comrades, their unforgettable service to mankind, is that they demonstrated in practice not only that socialism ‘works’—but that it works *better than capitalism*, affording an infinitely more rapid and more humane method of economic and industrial development than capitalism, even in the most favourable circumstances, ever achieved.

It was socialism and socialism alone that enabled a vast, under-

developed country of Europe and Asia, the vast majority of whose population was composed of illiterate peasants, to leap into the front rank of modern powers, with highly-developed industry, agriculture, science and technology, the pioneer of space research and the vanguard of human progress.

This great historic fact is of crucial significance to the peoples of newly-independent countries who stand at the fateful crossroads, the choice of which will determine their future path of development. There are only two choices: the one leads to socialism, the other to capitalism.

Of course, there are some who tell us that we have no choice, and among them even those who use 'Marxist' phrases about the alleged impossibility of skipping historical 'stages'. They cite the arguments of Lenin—perfectly valid in their time—against the utopian ideas of the Narodniks who thought that, by-passing capitalism and industrialisation, Russia could build some sort of idyllic 'socialist' society on the basis of the communal system of land ownership which once prevailed in Russia. Such scholastic arguments are completely foreign to the creative, dynamic character of Marxism. They overlook the one great central fact, which is that *the October Revolution itself changed everything*. It modified all problems, international and local, and called for new thinking and new solutions.

Many of the young Soviet Republics, especially those in Asia, were in various pre-capitalist stages of development. So was the People's Republic of Mongolia. But concrete historical experience proved that it was not necessary for these countries to pass through the stage of capitalism, with all its cruel exploitation, alienation, national disintegration and suffering. They could by-pass this historically obsolete stage precisely because of the existence, the protection from outside interference, and the assistance of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat established in Petrograd in 1917.

Our people in Africa know that socialism is possible—it has been proved. They know that socialism alone can enable our countries to set out on the race to catch up with the more advanced countries—a race imposed on us by the deliberate retardation of our development by colonialism—with any prospect of success, and without the monstrous injustices and cruelties of capitalism. They know that capitalism means subordination of our economies to Western monopolies, in fact, the loss of our independence.

The African masses are for socialism. Even those among the African leaders who for personal or class reasons, or because of their close links with imperialism, prefer the capitalist road, are afraid to say so if they seek popular support. African Governments which wish to support capitalism either pretend to be socialist, relying on demagogy and

supposed ignorance among the people of socialist principles; or else they scrap democratic constitutions and resort to military coups and dictatorships by army officers brainwashed in colonialist military academies.

African Governments which seek to realise the aspirations of the masses—such as those of the United Arab Republic, Tanzania, Guinea, Mali, Algeria and Congo-Brazzaville—are carrying out deep-going socio-economic reforms which create prerequisites for the socialist path of development. The recent events in Tanzania, following the Arusha Declaration, where President Nyerere and the Tanganyika African National Union have taken decisive and profound measures to capture the keys of the economy from imperialism and capitalism, open a glorious new chapter in the advance of the peoples of East, Central and Southern Africa towards a socialist future.

Of course the precise path and forms of transitions to socialism will differ in Africa from those in the different times and circumstances of the Soviet Union after 1917. But the great main guiding lines—power of the working people, social ownership as the dominant sector in the field of industry, profound agrarian reform—such outstanding lessons from the treasure-trove of experience in building socialism, are universally-valid legacies of the new civilisation erected on the foundations laid in 1917.

V

When the guns of the *Aurora* thundered out over Petrograd in October 1917, not many people in the world were very conscious of the real significance of these momentous events, or even believed that the Bolshevik Revolution would long be able to maintain itself. The capitalist press throughout the world was confidently predicting the imminent downfall of Soviet power—as it continued to do for many years to come. Many people, having no other sources of information, believed them. But some far-sighted men, in all corners of the world, guided by profound confidence in the working class and knowledge of the principles of scientific socialism, thought otherwise.

Among these was David Ivon Jones, talented South African Marxist, and Editor at that time of *The International*, the organ of the International Socialist League. Already, at the time of the February Revolution which overthrew the tsarist autocracy, he wrote that 'coming when the night of capitalism was far spent', the Russian revolution could not stop at the bourgeois democratic stage reached by the nineteenth-century revolutions in the West, but must inevitably advance to the stage of a socialist revolution.

Immediately after the historic October events he wrote again about

this remarkable vindication, hailing the Revolution as the greatest in history and the dawn of a new era for all men.

He and his comrades, S. P. Bunting and Bill Andrews, were among the founders of the Communist Party of South Africa, whose 45th anniversary was commemorated last July.

Throughout the period of its existence and still today, our Party, created in the revolutionary upsurge of the October Revolution, has remained faithful to that inspiration, defending the interests and the rights of the millions of workers and oppressed masses of our country.

In a country which has become a byword throughout the world for its racial tyranny and inhuman subjection of the African majority as well as the Coloured and Indian peoples, for its massacres and fascist legislation, its tortures, imprisonment, proscription and banishment of political opponents, the Communist Party boldly raised the banner of national liberation, of full democratic rights for all, of the return of the country's wealth to the people.

In the land of apartheid—the synonym for brute racialism the world over—the Communist Party set a convincing example of fraternal unity of all national groups, electing such outstanding African Communists as the late Albert Nzula and Moses Kotane to the post of General Secretary.

The Communist Party abided firmly by its policy of building a united front of national liberation around the country's greatest mass political organisation, the African National Congress, a front which included the Indian and Coloured Congresses, the Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of Democrats.

Driven underground by the vicious Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Party set about regrouping its forces for illegal struggle in the South African Communist Party, as well as participating vigorously in all the great legal struggles and campaigns of the Congress Alliance.

Despite this harsh struggle in our own country, the Party has also fulfilled its internationalist duty, participating in and loyally abiding by the decisions of meetings of the world Communist movement, and maintaining the publication of the quarterly the *African Communist* now in its seventh year of publication, carrying the truths of Marxism-Leninism throughout the length and breadth of our Continent.

Unity of Communists and non-Communists in the national liberation struggle is a cardinal principle of our struggle, to which South African Communists from all national groups have demonstrated their fidelity again and again in the struggle and in the dungeons and torture chambers of the Nazi hangman Vorster, Verwoerd's sinister successor.

Only last year, Bram Fischer, who led our Party's work inside the country during a year of living in hiding, disguised and under another

name, stood up in Court after his capture and before being sentenced to lifetime imprisonment, to make a brilliant defence of the principles and programme of the Party, a speech filled with defiance and contempt for the criminals whose rule has subjected millions to starvation, degradation and near-slavery and brought the country to the brink of civil war.

Terror and mass repressions have not broken the spirit of our people. Inside and outside the country the struggle goes on, embracing Communist and non-Communist patriots as we approach the new rounds of struggle, embracing all forms, including armed struggle, which however long it takes will certainly end in the overthrow of the hateful regime of white minority domination and the establishment of a free South Africa, with all the glorious prospects this will unfold for South Africa and Africa as a whole.

'A new era in human history opened with the great October Socialist Revolution of 1917', declares the Programme of the South African Communist Party, adopted at an underground conference in 1962. In the making of that new era, our people as well are determined to play their part.

Lenin said, 'No force on earth . . . is capable of taking from us the principal gains of our revolution, for they are no longer "ours" but have become the gains of world history'.

In a very real and concrete sense, we of Africa, and all the world's fighters for national liberation, understand that those gains are ours as well, and we are standing up to claim them.

3: Shaking the World

TERENCE AFRICANUS

'TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD.' That was how the American Communist John Reed entitled his dramatic eye-witness account of the socialist revolution as he saw it in Petrograd at the time. It was an accurate and prophetic phrase, for the revolution indeed 'shook the world' and altered the course of human history more than any other single event had ever done.

The very nature of the principles of the Russian revolution challenged the foundations of every existing society.

Lenin and his comrades announced such 'heresies' as these:

That the sacred title-deeds of the landowners, factory-owners, bankers and shareholders, domestic and foreign, were of no legal validity

and that henceforth all the means of production would be vested in the workers and peasants, the true creators of all wealth.

That The Great War, which was still raging at the cost of millions of lives and the squandering of enormous wealth and resources, was a fantastic swindle. It did not serve the interests of the peoples involved, but was fought over the contending claims of rival monopoly capitalists to world domination, and especially to the exclusive enslavement and exploitation of Asia and Africa.

That all nations had equal rights to self-determination, self-government and independence.

That the exploitation of man by man was a crime, to be outlawed as chattel slavery, in its time, had been outlawed; that no one had a right to live by robbing another of the fruits of his labour; that 'he who does not work, neither shall he eat'.

Nor were these startling principles announced as having validity for Russia alone. These new leaders of Russia were ardent internationalists, followers of the great revolutionary Karl Marx, who had founded the First International, and heralded forth the dynamic slogan: *'Workers of all countries, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have the world to win!'*

They saw the Russian revolution as part of a world revolutionary process that could only culminate in the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism everywhere, and the emancipation of all the world's workers and oppressed colonial peoples.

They took the initiative in setting up a new revolutionary organisation, the Communist International, composed of Marxist-Leninist Parties dedicated to the furtherance of this process and the liberation of their countries.

Small wonder that the powerful and privileged ones everywhere reacted with horror and fear.

They used all the powerful propaganda means at their command, through press, pulpit and classroom, to proclaim that the Bolsheviks were madmen, criminals and murderers. They declared that the young workers' state could not possibly survive—and took drastic action to fulfil this prophecy by violent intervention.

The main imperialist powers—Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Austro-Hungary and Japan and other countries—were fighting each other in the most destructive and terrible war ever seen. Yet they diverted troops to join in attempting to strangle the Russian revolution, and valuable resources to back the whiteguard armies fighting to overthrow Soviet power.

All these attempts failed.

The interventionists and White guards found themselves facing not

the demoralised and disillusioned troops of the old Tsarist army, who had been deserting in their thousands in 1917, but determined and devoted fighters of the newly-formed Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, fighting with the utmost skill and courage for a cause they understood and believed in, and backed by the masses of the population.

They found, too, that their policy of intervention in Russia was coming up against ever-increasing resistance in their own countries.

The very principles of scientific socialism which had filled the bourgeoisie with such dread and horror aroused the aspirations and enthusiasm of the masses of the people everywhere. In particular, movements of solidarity with the Soviet state and 'Hands off Russia!' Committees sprang up in many countries. Strikes and mutinies against intervention broke out among dockers and seamen.

REVOLUTIONARY UPSURGE

The end of the First World War saw revolutionary mass upsurges, inspired by the Russian revolution. In Germany Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, on the Soviet model sprang up, but these were largely under the influence of the treacherous Social-Democratic Party leaders who betrayed the workers' cause in the interests of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary Spartacus League (subsequently to become the Communist Party of Germany) led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, was not sufficiently well-established to take over the leadership; its leaders were subsequently assassinated and many of its members shot down. In Hungary a Soviet government, led by the Communist Party under the leadership of Bela Kun, was established, though imperialist intervention (in which South Africa's General Smuts played a prominent role) succeeded in restoring reaction.

In the colonial world, including Africa, the Russian revolution sparked off a chain reaction of militant struggles against foreign domination, struggles which have not diminished but gone forward with increasing vigour until today. This theme has been well dealt with elsewhere by the veteran South African revolutionary J. B. Marks.*

In this stormy international situation, by grim battles against internal reaction and its foreign backers, the workers' forces defeated the attempted counter-revolution and Soviet power was firmly established over a vast area covering one-sixth of the land surface of the earth.

It was a mighty victory, of incalculable significance not only to the

*See page 15 of this issue.

Soviet people but also to humanity. But it was a victory dearly bought. The years of civil war and foreign intervention, following upon the ravages of the First World War, had brought the Soviet Union to the verge of ruin.

Industry—backward as it was in 1913, compared with the advanced states of the West—had fallen to 14.3 per cent of its pre-war level; steel output was at less than 5 per cent of what it had been in 1913. In agriculture the same had happened, with farm products at less than half pre-war level.

Yet, despite these adverse circumstances, the people rallied to the plan put forward by Lenin and the Communist Party, envisaging the transformation of this ruined, devastated and backward land into a highly industrialised and advanced state, a socialist society. Priority was to be given to heavy industry and electrification. Farming was to be transformed on a socialist basis. A vast cultural revolution was embarked upon, to transform the masses of illiterate and uneducated peasant farmers into advanced skilled and conscious builders of a new society.

It was a formidable task indeed. To some it seemed fantastic and impossible. So it seemed to the great majority of foreign observers and 'experts'—and so it seemed even to some of the Soviet leaders themselves. Chief among them was the group around Leon Trotsky, who though never a Bolshevik before 1917, had played an important role in the Party and the Soviet Government in the Revolution and the years that immediately followed. This group lacked confidence in the workers and peasants of Russia, and held that the aim of building socialism in the Soviet Union was impossible of achievement, without a successful socialist revolution in the industrially-advanced West. Hence, they declared, all efforts should be concentrated on 'exporting revolution'.

These ideas were firmly rejected by the majority of the members of the Communist Party. They fully comprehended the international significance and role of the Russian revolution. But they were not romantic adventurers who imagined that liberation could be carried abroad at bayonet point against imperialism; they were scientific revolutionaries, adherents of the profound world outlook of historical materialism, men who understood the inner contradictions and conflicts of the revolutionary process in society.

Of course, the Soviet people themselves are a part of that process; they could not and never have withheld material and moral assistance from those who were able and willing to struggle for their own emancipation. But the main internationalist duty of the Soviet State and the Soviet people lay in strengthening their own country—

as a bastion and fortress in the imperialist world for the workers and oppressed people everywhere;

—as a living demonstration that socialism works—and that it works far better than capitalism in raising the material and cultural standards of the masses and in every progressive field of human endeavour;

—as an irrefutable proof (contrary to the claims of the self-proclaimed ‘governing classes’) that the ordinary workers and peasants are perfectly capable of governing and conducting the affairs of a great country—and that far more wisely, humanely and justly than the old aristocrats, or their successors, the greedy bankers, businessmen and manufacturers, ever did.

To construct socialism in this vast underdeveloped country, ruined by years of war, civil war and foreign intervention, on the verge of famine, was a task of heroic proportions, the more so in that the Soviet people had to rely solely on their own efforts, an island of workers’ rule in an ocean of hostile imperialist and capitalist countries.

Though the valiant efforts of the Red Army had compelled the imperialist bourgeoisie to end (or rather to postpone) their efforts at direct military intervention, they never ceased for a single day in their efforts to isolate and undermine the Soviet state. Boycotts and blockades were imposed; a stream of money poured forth from lavish coffers to finance espionage, sabotage and subversion. Every attempt was made from abroad to contact and encourage dissident elements inside the country—the dispossessed capitalists and the considerable numbers of petty bourgeoisie, rich peasants—the ‘kulaks’ (‘fists’—from their grasping habits) and others.

INDUSTRIALISATION

Industrialisation was not only the basis of development for socialism in the Soviet Union. It was also the precondition for the successful defence of the country against imperialist attack. And, especially with the rise of the Hitler Nazi regime in Germany (aided and abetted by German, British, American and other foreign monopoly capitalists), that danger had grown increasingly acute. German imperialism was feverishly re-arming and mobilising—and the aim of the Western policy of ‘appeasement’ was obviously to direct it eastward, against the Socialist Soviet Union.

In these circumstances, the industrialisation of the Soviet Union and the collectivisation of agriculture, had of necessity to proceed at a forced pace. The issue was no less than the survival of the country and of Soviet power.

The results speak for themselves. As a result of the first five-year plans (sneered at as ‘impossible’ in every capitalist newspaper) indus-

trial output in the Soviet Union had increased by 1940 to nearly eight times what it had been in 1913. The output of the means of production was multiplied to thirteen times the pre-war figure. Many new industries—aircraft, tractors and tanks, chemical and others—were developed, and the Soviet Union entered the front ranks of the world's industrial powers.

Sweeping changes took place in the countryside. Millions of small peasant farmers united into big collective farms on a socialist basis.

A true cultural revolution was carried out. In its proper sense, this implied a long-term, complex process of education, war on illiteracy, training of cadres and personnel, mass spreading of a true socialist culture which, while assimilating everything that is best in the common human cultural heritage, fought against the reactionary ideology and prejudices of the exploiting classes.

Had it not been for these tremendous social, economic and cultural efforts of the Soviet people, under the leadership of the Communist Party, the country would not have been able to withstand the frightful impact of the Nazi invasion commenced on June 22nd, 1941.

THE NAZI INVASION

The Nazi troops constituted the biggest army ever assembled anywhere. They were arrogant with easy victories throughout Europe, seasoned in battle, indoctrinated with fanatical belief that they were the 'master race'. They were backed by the military and industrial might of practically the whole of Western Europe, which Hitler's hordes had overrun in one blitzkrieg after another.

Many people imagined that the Soviet Union would be another 'pushover' for the 'invincible' Wehrmacht, especially when the huge, mechanised Axis forces broke through to the very gates of the capital, Moscow, besieged Leningrad and advanced to the banks of the Volga River.

Smuts, then Prime Minister of South Africa, said privately that he thought the Germans would conquer Russia in six weeks.

A very different prophecy was made by *Inkululeko* (Freedom), Johannesburg organ of the Communist Party. In June 1941 its poster and its main article announced confidently: **RED ARMY WILL SMASH HITLER.**

The 'pessimists' (did not their pessimism reveal their secret hopes?) completely failed to reckon with the profound patriotism, heroism and ferocity with which the entire Soviet people would arise to defend their socialist motherland.

Miracles of endurance and sacrifice were displayed by the Soviet people, under the inspiring leadership of the Communist Party. A

State Defence Committee headed by J. V. Stalin was set up, and under its direction the Soviet armies halted, outfought and out-generalled the Nazis, in the vast and epic battle of Stalingrad, the turning point of the entire Second World War, into which Hitler recklessly threw his entire resources, and in many other hard battles as well.

From the time of the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union the entire Second World War changed its character, and the main battlefront became that in the East. British, American, Free French and other forces struck hard and telling blows against the Axis. So did those of South Africa (though crippled by the colour bar which excluded African troops from armed combat) in the Western Desert, Italy and elsewhere. Guerilla movements harried the Nazis in Yugoslavia, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and many other countries.

But the decisive part was played by the Soviet people and their magnificent army, which met, engaged and destroyed the main forces of the enemy, and advanced victoriously, joining up with the patriots of the Eastern European countries, to destroy the Nazi beast in his lair and raise the Red Flag victoriously in the German capital, Berlin.

The Soviet people bore the main brunt of the war. Though many European peoples suffered grievously under the Nazi occupation, millions of Jews and others being butchered through the bestial policy of genocide, and Britain being subjected to terror attacks by missiles, the ravages of the fascist savages in the U.S.S.R. exceeded all bounds.

More than 20 million Soviet people were killed in battle or murdered by the fascists in jails and concentration camps. Hardly a family was not bereaved.

More than 70,000 towns, settlements and villages were utterly and deliberately destroyed by Hitler's barbarians.

One-third of the country's national wealth was lost in the war.

RECONSTRUCTION AND ADVANCE TO COMMUNISM

The great resilience and inner strength of socialist society were demonstrated by the rapidity with which the Soviet Union recovered from these grievous wounds, and went forward to even greater achievements.

Something of the pace and extent of this post-war progress can be gauged from the figures of the output of key industrial items between 1940 and 1960:

	<i>1940</i>	<i>1960</i>
Steel (million tons)	18.3	65
Oil (million tons)	31.1	148
Gas (million cubic metres) ..	3,400	47,000
Electric power (million kWh.) ..	48,300	292,000

This fast rate of development has continued into the 'sixties.

Twenty of the fifty years of the Soviet state have been spent in fighting aggression and subsequent rehabilitation of the economy. Despite this diversion the Soviet experience has already fully proved the great superiority of socialism for developing the resources of a country. Between 1929 and 1966 the average yearly growth-rate of industrial production has been 11 per cent (compared with 4 per cent for the U.S. and 2.5 per cent for Britain and France). This year steel output will be over 100 million tons. Since 1913 total industrial output has been multiplied sixty-six times; output in engineering and metallurgy 538 times; chemicals 294 times; electricity 267 times. Inevitably food output growth-rates are slower, but here, too, a 12.8 times increase has been registered.

Because the socialist system is free from the periodic crises of capitalism and is capable of overall scientific planning, the growth has been all-round and well-balanced, based not on the greed of private manufacturers, but the real needs and welfare of the people.

Wages and living standards have increased sharply. The services to the ordinary citizen from the state—education, child-care, health, pensions, holidays, etc.—are unparalleled anywhere in the world. Enormous efforts have been made in the sphere of housing. Every year over ten million people move into new flats—over a half of the population having been rehoused over the past ten years.

Most Soviet workers enjoy a forty-one-hour, five-day working week.

NATIONAL FREEDOM

Fast as has been the rate of development for Soviet society as a whole, it has been fastest of all in those Asian and other outlying regions which, in tsarist times, were the scene of typical colonialist neglect, exploitation and stagnation. The peoples of these areas won their national freedom. For the first time their languages and culture received recognition; their children were educated and all enjoyed equal rights. But beyond this, the Communists recognised that true independence can only rest securely on a foundation of modern economic development; thus a much higher proportion of national capital was put into the development of industrial and other forms of modernisation in precisely these formerly 'depressed areas'.

Today the Soviet Union, established in the territory of that former 'prison of nations', the Tsarist Empire, stands as a fraternal and equal family of nations—Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Georgians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis and many others: a firm union of free republics.

Judged by any standard the achievement of the Communist Party

of the Soviet Union has been extraordinary. From one of the world's 'underdeveloped' areas, Marxism-Leninism and workers' and peasants' power has transformed the U.S.S.R. into the foremost state in Europe, a 'super-power' whose science and technology stands second to none, whose spacemen have pioneered the path of mankind into the cosmos.

The Soviet people and their Communist Party are far from resting on their laurels. At this, their first half-century they are already planning the next great forward step in mankind's conquest of the future—the advance to Communism.

Socialism is based on the principle—'From each according to his ability; to each according to his work.' That means that—since one man's capacity to contribute to the wealth of society is naturally greater than another's—there remains areas of inequality.

In the Communist society of the future, the principle will remain of contribution according to one's capacity. But one will receive from society according to one's needs, rather than to one's personal contribution.

This presupposes both a very high level of production, such as to eliminate scarcity, and a very high level of social consciousness on the part of all members of society.

To both these goals the Soviet people are devoting their fullest resources of human effort and ingenuity in ever-more sophisticated methods of production, planning and economic techniques.

A STEEP AND ARDUOUS CLIMB

The ascent to socialism has been steep and arduous for these, the pioneers of that new and higher form of society in which all the world's children shall one day live.

It was the more arduous because they *were* pioneers traversing unknown terrain, with no map, but only the true compass of scientific Marxist-Leninist theory. Inevitably there were mistakes which were dearly paid for.

It was the more rough and hasty a path because they were alone, surrounded by hostile imperialist states—unlike the new socialist societies which have followed and will follow. Under constant menace of attack, they had to build quickly and roughly, for opposition and criticism.

It was under such strains and stresses that there could develop such an un-Communist phenomenon as the cult of individual hero-worship of Stalin, which was accompanied by undemocratic violations of socialist law, and was reflected in such diverse fields as science, history, architecture, art and literature. This unfortunate development was denounced at the historic Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1956.

Since that time far-reaching steps have been taken to correct such diversions from the broad main road of socialist democracy.

Such negative features, however, must be seen against the broad main perspective. That perspective is one of the titanic contributions the Soviet people and their leaders have made to humanity during fifty years of devoted and self-sacrificing adherence to the cause of Marxism-Leninism, the cause of the emancipation of mankind.

Whatever its temporary imperfections, socialist democracy is infinitely more real and genuine than the bourgeois 'democracy' of the West, which tramples ruthlessly on the rights of the great majority of the peoples of the world, particularly of the 'non-Europeans', whom it regards as less than human. The relatively higher living standards of the imperialist countries, no less than their vaunted civil liberties, have been gained at the expense of the super-profits, super-exploitation and enslavement of hundreds of millions of victims of colonialism and neo-colonialism, east and south of Suez, and south of the Mason-Dixon line.

'DAWN OF THE WORLD'

In this series of articles, we have been concerned mainly with the consequences of the Great October Revolution in so far as they affected the Soviet people themselves. But with every year which has passed since November 1917, we have been able to discern more clearly the dimensions of that Revolution as marking not merely a new era for the Russian people and their immediate neighbours, but the beginning of an entire new era for the whole of humanity—the age of Socialism.

Exactly fifty years after the first publication of the major theoretical work of Karl Marx, *Capital*, his greatest disciple, Vladimir Lenin, at the head of the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard, the Bolshevik Party, began the daring project of building, on the ruins of the Russian empire, a new society founded on the principles of scientific socialism which Marx had been the first to elucidate.

Their brilliant success has confirmed the true vision of the men of genius who conceived those principles, and ensured the inevitable defeat of capitalism and imperialism, the triumph of the socialist principles—the rule of the working people, the abolition of exploitation and of class and national oppression—in every corner of the world.

Already a third of humanity, in fourteen countries, ranging from Czechoslovakia in the heart of Europe, to the East of Asia and to Cuba,

have thrown capitalism overboard and chosen to follow the Communists to build socialism.

Practically the whole continent of Asia and the greater part of Africa have responded to the inspiration of the anti-imperialist tidal wave unleashed by the October Revolution, and fought forward to win independence. Many of these countries have determined to eliminate and avoid capitalism and march forward towards socialism.

Ever larger sections of the working class in the advanced countries of imperialism are taking up the banner of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. In France and Italy the Communists constitute the main opposition Parties; elsewhere, as in Britain and the U.S., though still minority Parties, the Communists command the respect and allegiance of ever wider sections of the thinking workers and youth by their courageous devotion to the cause of the workers and their unyielding fight against imperialist oppression, whether in their own countries, Vietnam, Southern Africa or the Arab lands.

We are indeed living in a new era, the epoch opened on November 7th, 1917, which began the next stage of human history, man's transition from capitalism to socialism. It is a time when the poet's words do truly apply:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive

and history has vindicated the ecstatic title given by Ivon Jones to his article greeting the Russian revolution—*Dawn of the World*.

NO EASY WALK

But it has been, and still will be, 'No Easy Walk to Freedom'.

Compared with the position fifty years ago, the grand alliance of the world's workers, peasants and oppressed peoples has taken giant strides forward. But every inch of the way has had to be accompanied by fierce struggles, Herculean labours, sacrifices and bloodshed. Nor may we expect the remaining stages of humanity's great trek to socialism to be achieved, without fierce struggles.

The people's enemy, imperialism, has suffered major reverses, but is far from its final defeat. Forced to retreat from the socialist third of the world, and to concede formal independence to the hundreds of millions in its former empires, imperialism yet remains a potent and viciously dangerous force, commanding great resources, openly preparing and carrying out plans and preparations for counter-revolution in every part of the world, harbouring dreams of reversing the tide of history and re-establishing world domination.

The centre of international imperialism has moved from Europe to the United States of America, where the giant monopoly concerns which hold every government, Democrat or Republican, in the palm of

their hands, are pouring billions of dollars into war and war preparations. Science and technology are perverted and channelled into devising fantastic techniques—nuclear, chemical and biological—for the mass destruction of human life. Enormous sums of money are spent on extending the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency—the most ferocious expression of international gangsterism ever known, which makes America's membership of the United Nations and professions of adherence to international law a farce. In a score of countries (for example, Guatemala, Dominica, Indonesia, Ghana, the Congo) the U.S. and its agency, the C.I.A., have succeeded in acts of aggression to oust popular governments and install imperialist puppets. In many countries they prop up hated regimes—such as that of Ian Smith, Vorster and Salazar—which could not stand a day against the people's anger without the money and the weapons provided by foreign imperialism.

The forces of imperialism and reaction remain powerful—ruthless, treacherous, aggressive, wealthy and cunning. It is no service to the cause of those who are fighting these forces to dismiss them as harmless 'paper tigers'.

At the same time, there are many factors which give us complete confidence that these powerful forces can and will be defeated, and that the common people comprising the overwhelming majority of humanity will advance triumphantly to a world of socialism, national liberation, democracy and peace.

The very foundations of imperialist strength and strategy are insecure and shaky: eroded and rotted by irreparable interior stresses and conflicts.

Recently, in a number of the main cities of the United States itself, the descendants of the sons and daughters of Africa who were seized and deported as slaves, have risen in rebellion against the outrageous conditions of degradation and suppression to which they have long been, and still are, subjected.

The superficial unity of the imperialist camp, established after the Second World War with the unquestioned hegemony of U.S. finance capital, is beginning to crumble. The French and other imperialists are challenging America's claims to a 'divine right' of domination, and inter-imperialist rivalries, fundamental and inevitable contradictions, are again asserting themselves.

Invariably the calculations of the reactionaries, based on their inherent outlook of contempt for the common people, fail to reckon with the tremendous resources and capabilities of those people once they have united and rallied round a clear-sighted vanguard.

In Vietnam—as in Cuba—they have struck a rock—an armed,

united and mobilised people, dedicated to independence or death.

Ever the revolutionary wave, given so powerful a stimulus by the great upheaval of 1917, rolls forward: bursting forth now in one area, now in another, of the now diminished territory still ruled by imperialism, capitalism and neo-colonialism. Even as I am writing these lines, comes the tremendous news of yet a new front of struggle opened up by the heroic guerillas of the A.N.C.-Z.A.P.U. Fighting Alliance in the no-man's-land of Zimbabwe, against the gangster Smith's terrorists, and marching towards the Limpopo and beyond, for the liberation of the enslaved Southland of Africa.

And today, as for the past fifty years, stands, as a mighty stronghold and fortress of the world's peoples, the Soviet State, founded by the great Lenin and his comrades and led ever forward by Lenin's Party.

Standing today, not alone, but at the centre of a commonwealth of fraternal socialist countries—and history will surely correct the deviations of Mao and his followers who have temporarily disrupted their unity—the Soviet Union has proved itself again and again, throughout its existence and still today, an inexhaustible source of strength and confidence to the countless millions of the world's population who, starving, groaning under oppression and exploitation, strive and fight forwards towards freedom and socialism, towards the simple universal goals which Lenin wrote on the banners of the October Revolution: **PEACE: BREAD: LAND.**

That is why, on this great anniversary, we of Africa, so long the enslaved and wretched of the earth, join with our brother workers and peasants everywhere, to celebrate this occasion as our own, and with love and comradeship, to greet the Soviet people and their glorious Communist Party.