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| Yakov Abramovich KRONROD(1972)“Socio-Oligarchism.On the nature of the Soviet System.”Traduit du Russe à l’anglais parMarc-David MANDELProfesseur titulaire, retraité du département de sciences politique, UQÀM[2012)**LES CLASSIQUES DES SCIENCES SOCIALES**CHICOUTIMI, QUÉBEC<http://classiques.uqac.ca/> |



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**Socio-Oligarchism:
On the Nature of the Soviet System**

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On the nature of the Soviet System.”

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Introduction

Par Marc-David Mandel, 2012

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Yakov Abramovich Kronrod (1912-1984) was a leading Soviet theorist in the political economy of socialism. Although he was a highly original thinker, there is no indication he had any serious trouble with the authorities before the late 1960s. Indeed, his career until then makes him appear as very much an establishment figure. Moreover, ideological control in the social sciences was particularly strict.

Kronrod earned his higher degrees in the 1930s, then worked Gosplan and the Central Statistics Agency, before obtaining a position at the prestigious Institute of Economics of the Academy of Science of the USSR, the country’s premier economic research centre. When the war broke out, Kronrod immediately volunteered and spent the next four years at the front, ending the war with the rank of major. After the war, he returned to the Economics Institute to head its theoretical sector, a position he held until the late 1960s.

Kronrod was a leading figure of the Soviet economic school of so-called “tovarniki” (marketeers) and a major participant in the discussions on economic reform in the 1960s. This reform was to give a greater role to market relations and, accordingly, a significant measure of autonomy to enterprises, but always within the framework of the planned economy in which enterprises would remain national property. This corresponded to the conception of socialism that Kronrod defended on both theoretical and pragmatic grounds. He argued that socialism is a separate mode of production from communism and not merely communism in a still immature state, as the orthodox position claimed. A very timid version of the economic reform Kronrod was advocating was eventually introduced in 1965.

When Nikita Khrushchev was dismissed as party leader at the October 1964 Central Committee plenum, few realized that this would inaugurate a period of bureaucratic reaction that would end the post-Stalin “thaw” and bury hopes for socialist renewal in the Soviet Union. These hopes were shared by many, including Kronrod and the other members of his economic school. While there were many reasons for dissatisfaction with Khrushchev’s leadership, in ousting Khrushchev the nomenklatura (the Central Committee was a gathering of the cream of this élite) was moved primarily by its concern to protect the power and the accompanying material privileges of its members.

It was above all the Soviet Union’s suppression of the “Prague spring” in 1968 that crushed hopes for a regeneration of socialism in the USSR. The “Prague spring” had been an attempt, endorsed and to a large degree led by the Czechoslovak Communist Party, to democratize the state and to move the society toward socialism. One of the arguments brought out to justify the invasion was that Czechoslovakia’s economic reform, dubbed “market socialism” – a term to which Kronrod vigorously objected – was anti-socialist.

What was left of the economic reform in the Soviet Union was soon wound up. Concomitantly, the views of Kronrod’s school became the object of severe criticism. In December 1971, Kronrod was finally removed as head of an already much diminishedSector for the General Problems of Political Economy of the Economics Institute. The administrative memorandum ordering his demotion cited a series of very serious “errors” in his work. It stated that Kronrod claimed :

- socialism in the USSR is a separate [from communism] order of socioeconomic inequality

- exploitation continues to exist in the USSR

- there is no basis for the moral-political unity of the people

- there is no basis for the friendship of its various peoples

- a material basis for mature, developed socialism will not exist for a long time.

- socialism is a separate mode of production from communism and not merely its early phase. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Except for the last two statements, Kronrod never directly argued those things. However, depending on how one chose to read his work, one could find those things in it. Intellectual life in the Soviet Union was a highly complex and ambiguous affair. For example, the statement “socialism is democratic” could be read to mean: “Since the Soviet Union is socialist, it is democratic”; or alternatively: “Since the Soviet Union is not democratic, it is not socialist.” But the main aspect of Kronrod`s thought that attracted the ire the party’s ideologues was undoubtedly his argument that enterprises under socialism should be economic subjects in their own right, albeit within the dominant framework of the planned economy and while remaining the collective property of the entire society.

This view was perceived by the Soviet nomenklatura as a threat to its monopoly of power, which its members correctly understood to be the cornerstone of their system. Any concession from that fundamental principle placed it in mortal danger. There could be only genuine subject in the bureaucratic system: the unified central leadership. Even better was a supreme dictator, but the experience under Stalin had shown that to be too dangerous for the members of the nomenklatura themselves. It was not so much the power that a measure of enterprise autonomy would confer to directors that was feared but the threat that that would lead workers to demand real power for themselves, since their material well-being, their work conditions, job security and much else would become dependent on the performance of their enterprise. This was not the case under the “command economy”, where workers conditions in any given sector, and to a significant extent across sectors, were more or less uniform.

This logic had clearly manifested itself in Czechoslovakia, where the workers’ initial resistance to the economic reform was overcome only when the reform was amended in 1968 to provide for the election of workers’ councils with real decision-making power. The same logic was at work when Gorbachev issued his 1987 Law on the State Enterprise, the cornerstone of his “market reform.” That law provided for the election of workers’ councils with extensive powers. (These powers, however, were almost nowhere realized before the law was rescinded in 1990 in conjunction with the decision to restore capitalism.) The same logic manifested itself in Hungary, where a version of the reform was introduced. But this was controllable in Hungary, since the society had already undergone “pacification” in the 1950s. [[2]](#footnote-2)

This is not the place to discuss in any detail Kronrod’s economic ideas, which, are, unfortunately, little known in the West, where most Marxists (following Marx, to be sure) argue that market relations have no place in socialism, at least once it is established on its own basis. This became the sole tolerated view in Soviet economics after 1968. [[3]](#footnote-3) Suffice it to say that Kronrod considered that it is not commodity relations that define capitalism as a mode of production but exploitation based on wage labour. The question of power, therefore, and not the form of exchange – whether direct non-equivalent exchange (the sphere of the plan) or indirect commodity, equivalent exchange (market relations) – logically takes centre place. From this point of view, Marx would have done better to begin Capital, not from his analysis of the commodity, but from his discussion of primitive accumulation, the forced separation of the producers from the means of production.

But although Kronrod argued that the law of value and competition between enterprises had their place in socialism, he was very clear that socialism is based on a centrally planned economy and on social (national) ownership and that that the planned dimension must clearly predominate and set definite limits to market relations. He opposed, for example, the Yugoslav system, seeing it the claim to “de-statize” property a clear danger of the usurpation of social (national) property for the benefit of narrow, group interests. He similarly rejected anarchist models based on collective-group property as signifying the dominance of spontaneous market self-regulation. [[4]](#footnote-4)

The following essay on “Socio-oligarchism” that Kronrod “wrote for the drawer” sometime in the late 1960s and early 1970s (it was first published only in 1992) marked a radical break for him in his thinking about the Soviet system. Until then, he (and the other members of his school) had believed the system was capable of reforming itself and that it would indeed do so. The essay makes clear that he came to view the Soviet Union as an historical dead-end and that only a revolution could put the country back onto a socialist path. (For an analysis of the workers’ movement in the last years of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, see my Perestroika and the Soviet People.) This was no small leap for a man who had reached maturity under Stalin’s dictatorship and had been a part of the victory over fascism under Stalin’s leadership.

But in the essay, Kronrod remains fundamentally optimistic about the socialist prospects for his country, even while he allows for much less positive outcomes. His optimism was based partly on a certain technological determinism, a Stalinist legacy few Soviet social scientists were able to escape. Another problematic aspect of the essay is the rather obscure reference to the influence of the “socialist base”, a base which, however, he qualifies as only “formal” and “significantly distorted.” This reminds one of Trotsky’s “degenerated workers’ state,” which posed similar difficulties from a dialectical point of view, although he was attempting to capture something very real. Other ideas that will probably appear strange to Western Marxists are the essay’s advocacy of parliamentary (as opposed to soviet-type) democracy and the proposal to separate economy and state. Kronrod never returned to those ideas in his subsequent writing.

But overall, Kronrod’s analysis is dialectical and far from deterministic. Despite his fundamental optimism, he recognized the serious obstacles to the emergence of an adequate, socialist consciousness among workers. From today’s viewpoint, his optimism no doubt appears misplaced. But the end of the bureaucratic system might well have taken a different form had its final agony not been so short-lived (leaving so little time for a workers’ movement to develop and gain experience before being undercut by “shock therapy”) and if the correlation of class forces on the international level been more favourable to socialism (as it had been, for example, at the time of the “Prague spring” in 1968.)

In conclusion, few words about Kronrod, the man, are in order. A former junior researcher in Kronrod’s sector the 1960s who later went on to become a major Marxist thinker in his own right, one of the very few Soviet economists to remain a Marxist after the Soviet Union disappeared, recalled:

He was a deeply educated man, with a firm grounding in philosophy, a genuine master of dialectic materialism. He was vital, alive. It was a pleasure to listen to him. The intellectual atmosphere of the time was stale, grey, dusty. And suddenly, in the midst of that – Kronrod, brilliant, vital. To the Central Committee bureaucrats, who viewed him as serf, he was an unpleasantly intelligent man. He bothered them. They tolerated his ideas until the later 1960s but didn’t want them to conflict with their decisions.

He was an example for us. The breadth of his intelligence and the depth of his humanism opened new horizons. It made us ashamed to stay little. He didn’t impose this - it was simply his presence. His lectures were theater of the highest level – exciting and enlightening, light-years beyond anything I had heard in my years at the university. They were not just events, but holidays. They were a fusion of high science, culture and extraordinary art.

The determinism that is appears toward the end of the essay did not come from the inside. It was a part of our education. I caught myself in the 1990s with that metaphysical, deterministic thought. You only realize it when you pose big goals. But Kronrod’s work and that of the other members of his school really systematized what socialism should be. The work of school was the most productive of the Soviet period of what was written on the political economy of socialism, if that is ever to be. In fact, we prepared a programme for getting our society out of totalitarianism and into socialism. It would have been of great value in 1989 had the country turned then to socialism. [[5]](#footnote-5)

This same person recounted the following episode from his time working under Kronrod’s leadership:

He was a Don Quixote of science, and whatever we, his students, have of that quality, we caught from him. But he was not what one would call an “otherworldly intellectual.” I remember the following episode:

When Kronrod’s large sector was reduced to a tiny one [in 1968], they left him only three or four positions for senior researchers. The weakened front and the blow to research were striking. And in the midst of this, Kronrod appoints Ivan Aleksandrovich Anchishkin from the former sector to one of the positions of senior researcher. Lacking experience, I asked Kronrod:

“Yakov Abramovich! Why did you take on Achishkin? His work is of no value to science.”

— “What does science have to do with it!?” he replied sharply, deeply annoyed. He was silent for a time and then added: “For seventeen days [during the Battle of Moscow], Anchishkin led our division out of encirclement. And he got us out. His was our unit’s commissar; our commander had been killed.”

“Socio-oligarchism
- Pseudo-socialism
of the Twentieth Century.”

Yakov Abramovich Kronrod

1972 [[6]](#footnote-6)

Moscow

1. The Essence
of Socio-oligarchism

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The term “socio-oligarchism” draws on two concepts: socialization (collectivization) and oligarchy (the power of the few; their political and economic domination). It denotes a socio-economic phenomenon that arises and develops in the complex twists and turns of the struggle of historical forces of the twentieth century that have striven to establish socialism.

The combination of socialization at the national level of the principle means of production and the totalitarian dictatorial power of the social stratum that controls the state – thus excluding any genuine political democracy – transforms this ruling stratum into a distinct privileged group of political and economic oligarchs, a socio-oligarchy.

The historically specific, fundamental aspect of socio-oligarchy is that it represents a new political and socio-economic formation: a distinct ruling stratum - one that has monopolized all managerial functions, political, economic, and other – a social stratum opposed to the rest of society and that arose in the process of degeneration of the political superstructure, the transformation of the power of the proletariat into that of a bureaucratic, militaristic, ruling stratum, power that is exercised in the form of a personalized, totalitarian dictatorship. Moreover, that social stratum exercises it largely through coercion (and, in certain historical situations, through mass terror) through the apparatus of the former ruling party, which in reality has been transformed from a political party into a ramified, obedient mechanism for projecting the power of the dictator. This apparatus penetrates all levels and cells of society and dominates the state, the economy, and all other spheres of social life.

The internal logic of development of this absolute power leads to the predominant satisfaction of the rulers’ interests at the expense of those of all the rest of society. Step by step, the ruling stratum coalesces politically into a force that dominates society. At the same time and as a consequence, it coalesces economically, appropriating an ever-growing part of the national income, towering over the other strata with its privileged living standard. In other words, it appropriates a significant part of the surplus product, thus becoming a new, distinct exploiting stratum.

A key to understanding socio-oligarchy is the historically objective law of the period that follows a proletarian revolution. During this period of transition to socialism (as we are now able to theorize), the socioeconomic structure is not simple and homogeneous, one consisting, for example, of homogeneous workers. (That was more or less how the Marxist classics imagined it in their general reflections on a future socialism. See *Capital*, vol. 1; *Towards a Critic of the Gotha programme*; *State and Revolution.*)

The real situation is fundamentally different. The current level of development of productive forces objectively presupposes a highly complex, even increasingly complex, and socially heterogeneous structure, consisting of diverse socio-economic strata that are distinguished by their place in social production and, consequently, by their unequal appropriation-use of the means of production. (The strata of workers engaged in mental labour and those engaged in physical labour, industrial and agrarian workers, those who create and those who execute, those who administer and who are administered, and so forth.)

Each social stratum is characterized by its own socio-economic and political interests. From this there follows a basic principle, namely that the institution of political democracy is internally immanent to socialism. Democracy is called upon to provide genuine representation for all the various social strata and to reconcile and balance their interests, allowing none to dominate, and in particular not the members of the social stratum that specializes in economic and political administration. In other words, socialism is inseparable from political democracy. Democracy is the mechanism required to guarantee the genuinely equal satisfaction of the political, social and economic interests of all social strata and to find solutions for conflicting interests, uniting the various strata in socially-balanced, socialist cooperation. Socialism is, therefore, just as impossible without genuine, comprehensive political democracy as it is without socialization of the means of production, public ownership. Recognition of the necessity of political democracy as the mechanism for the socioeconomic harmonization of interests of the socially diverse strata that make up society is the main lesson of the tragic history of social revolutions of the twentieth century, and, in the first place, of the socialist revolution in Russia.

When one of the two elements of socialism, namely political democracy, is absent, socialization of the means of production coupled with the total usurpation of power by the ruling stratum leads inevitably to socio-oligarchy.

Nevertheless, the socio-oligarchy does not constitute a distinct social class. That is is so, in the first instance, because the means of production do not become the property (private or collective) of that stratum. It participates in the appropriation of the surplus product, not as the monopolistic owner of the material conditions of production (the basis of any social class of exploiters that exists or has ever existed), but exclusively as a consequence of its oligarchic-managerial, dictatorial functions. Any member of the oligarchy that loses his functions loses at the same time his share of the surplus product.

The second reason this stratum does not constitute a class – and this is a decisive condition – is that this stratum is not a logical element of the internal structure of a mode of production (in this case, the transitional mode to socialism, or of initial forms of socialism): it is not a product of that structure. Formed with all the characteristics of a privileged stratum as a result of the logic of development of a dictatorial, anti-democratic superstructure, the socio-oligarchy imposes itself upon a mode of production that is internally hostile to it and that it parasitizes. It sucks out its vital forces, creates obstacles to its development, undermining progress and threatening to extinguish completely the forces that advance its development, and transforms it into a historical dead-end (from the point of view of its capacity for forward development).

The socio-oligarchy’s domination requires a certain level social support. This it creates it by distributing material and social privileges and by directly corrupting certain upper strata of workers, peasants and members of the intelligentsia. These elements separate themselves from the rest of the working population and become opposed to the main body of the masses. As a result, an entire socio-oligarchic social structure forms (political, economic and socio-cultural) that dominates the people and exists by squeezing out the surplus product from it.

Around the socio-oligarchic structure, serving it and at the same time striving energetically to enter its ranks, supplying it with necessary cadres, one finds a peculiar, modern petty-bourgeoisie that consists of déclassé elements of the working class, of the peasantry, and of the intelligentsia. These are people who have managed to insert themselves comfortably into the pores of socio-oligarchic society, grabbing for themselves, by legal or illegal means, a bigger chunk of the prize; people to whom any sort of social solidarity is alien; embittered people full of nationalist-chauvinistic prejudice and prepared, at the first summons, to rip to pieces anyone at whom the power-holders point their finger. These millions of philistines who inhabit the outer areas of the cities and their suburbs constitute a mass reservoir and they provide a not insignificant support for the socio-oligarchy.

While concerned with the pursuit of its own interests, the socio-oligarchy is at the same time forced – by self-interest – to support the expanded reproduction of the socio-economic structure of the socialist mode of production, upon which it parasites. In this lies its profound internal contradiction. The development of the socialist mode of production objectively requires democratic institutions – political, economic, socio-cultural – institutions that would create the conditions, forms and incentives for progressive movement. But the rule of the socio-oligarchy excludes any democratic foundation. Its totalitarian-dictatorial, bureaucratic mode of rule is intimately linked to administrative-coercive incentives in the areas of work, production, and in other social processes.

The socialist basis becomes deformed as a consequence of the action of this alien superstructure. The result is an unnatural, ugly combination of what remains of the socialist basis with the alien forms of its administration. Ownership of the means of production formally belongs to society as a whole, but the direct producers are removed from appropriation and disposition. Their property is managed by the socio-oligarchy as it sees fit and in its own interests. The workers in the state enterprises are masses of exploited producers of surplus product, which is extracted from them by the exploiting socio-oligarchy. The peasants, assembled in cooperatives, are similarly removed from the control of their farms. The collective farms are, in practice, organizations for fiscal tribute that pump out surplus product.

But the socio-oligarchy does not limit itself to appropriation of surplus product. It also squeezes out of the worker a not small part of the necessary product, reducing the incomes of workers, peasants and the intelligentsia to below the cost of the replacement of their spent labour power. Illegal forms of mass appropriation of material values by the producers (pilfering of raw material, of parts, finished goods, of work-time) is the inevitable reaction of workers to violation of the unconditional law of the subsistence minimum. These are a spontaneous ways of raising real income to that minimum. This is the soil out of which corruption, speculation and other forms of socio-economic decay and moral degradation grow. And all this is topped off by mass graft on the part of authorities of all ranks. They all view and exploit their official functions in way reminiscent of the medieval Russian system, when state officials supported themselves at the expense of the local population. The tribute, monetary and natural, extracted from the people flows into their pockets.

The socio-oligarchy’s distortion and violation of productive relations that are formally socialist in nature undermine any possibility of normal economic administration. Economic methods of managing the productive process, economic competition and material work incentives, are undermined or completely eliminated and replaced by coercion. The stick predominates over economic incentive. The huge, unwieldy, sluggish, and costly apparatus of economic management creates an orgy of waste of both living and dead labour, as well as of natural resources.

A historically progressive base is thus transformed into its own opposite.

As a consequence, an irreconcilable contradiction arises between the necessary development of productive forces and the producers themselves. It manifests itself in the absence of socio-economic forces and incentives that would provide a framework for harnessing the potential of the contemporary global, scientific-technical revolution.

Hence, there is a growing lag in reaping the benefits of the scientific-technical revolution. Economic growth under this system bears has a mainly quantitative character. Qualitative change occurs only very slowly. There is an increasing and irreversible tendency toward defeat in the scientific-technical and economic competition with the West.

This tendency is reinforced by the existence of the atomic umbrella. Although the costs of the military are huge, it provides a world strategic balance for the socio-oligarchic empire. It can go on for a long time under this umbrella without feeling that scientific-technical progress and its fruits are slipping out of its hands.

It can shield itself for quite a while behind a Chinese wall of modern armaments from approaching defeat in scientific-technical competition, as it shovels ever-increasing amounts of national income into the voracious throat of militarism. But it cannot go on forever! Atomic-strategic equilibrium cannot last forever. Scientific and technical progress makes this equilibrium only temporary. When it does end, the socio-oligarchy will discover that the game has been hopelessly lost.

The socio-oligarchic structure creates a stifling social atmosphere for the activity of society. It maintains scientific, artistic and, all intellectual creativity in general, under a state-imposed, homogenizing bell-jar. The intellectual climate of socio-oligarchy is deleterious to spiritual life. It erects almost insurmountable, dogmatic, ideological and bureaucratic-police barriers to intellectual innovation. The stultifying ideological climate imposed and maintained by the bureaucracy is incompatible with genuine innovation. It treats innovation, even the most innocent deviation from established formulae, as subversive, as an attack on the foundations, the symbols of the faith, as heresy that requires immediate and ruthless eradication. Socio-oligarchism encourages the substitution of surrogates, whose only purpose is to mask the parasitic, exploitative character of the socio-oligarchy, for creation of genuine spiritual values in science, art, literature and other areas.

The situation of workers – the working class, peasantry, social groups within classes, the intelligentsia and its strata – is extremely complex and confused. On the one hand, their productive activity is based on a foundation that is still formally socialized, although it is seriously deformed. On the other, their opportunities for self-management, autonomous activity and the economically reasonable use of the surplus product for workers’ own needs are usurped by the socio-oligarchy. The satisfaction of their needs and the realization of their interests are significantly limited and increasingly sacrificed to the swelling appetites of the socio-oligarchy.

The objective antagonism between their interests and those of the socio-oligarchy is making its way into the consciousness of the oppressed masses, but only slowly and dimly. The process is hindered by the continued existence of the formally socialized base, with its economic laws that, however deformed and weak, are nevertheless present. Another obstacle to the development of consciousness is the oligarchic nature of appropriation of the surplus product, which does not have a class, but an oligarchic character, that of a social stratum. This appropriation is super-structural and parasitic in nature, rather than being structural and productive. This muddies the very fact of exploitative appropriation by the socio-oligarchy of the fruits of the people’s labour. On the surface of economic relations, this appropriation appears not as the logical result of the parasitic activity of the socio-oligarchy but only as the more-or-less accidental, temporary, transitional phenomenon of a still imperfect regime, merely as miscalculations and subjective injustices of the present administration.

The whole force of dogmatic, ideological conditioning stands in the way of the development of this consciousness. The socio-oligarchy is still able quite successfully to exploit the socialist values of the masses’ world view, values that have a certain historical inertia and are shed only slowly and laboriously. The world-view of the masses was formed by history, but by now it has no real basis and has become illusory. The propaganda machine crudely and shamelessly exploits these illusions in its own interest. With the aid of concepts that once expressed a real ideology, this propaganda conceals the essence of the neo-exploitative regime behind a convenient curtain of social demagoguery, sanctified by history and the cult of revolutionary actors.

This social demagogy is inseparable from the total, merciless, police repression of the people. Civil society is ensnared in a web of police spies and informants. All the modern techniques of electronic surveillance are combined with old-fashioned methods of eavesdropping, spying, interception of letters, taping of telephone conversations, intimidation, blackmail and similar methods employed by the political police world over. Legal lynching through the courts is supplemented by an all-powerful system of completely arbitrary tyranny, of administrative repression – blacklisting, refusal of residence permits, withdrawal of internal passports, internal exile, expulsion, etc.

The secret system of organs of the so-called state security has appropriated the “science” of the Tsarist secret police, which was one of provocation, formed over centuries of struggle against social resistance. It has combined this with the “science” of Stalinist terrorism directed against the mass of the population and aimed at crushing not only real resistance but at discovering even potential carriers of resistance in any form and in any place. Finally, it has armed itself with the most modern technology on a hitherto unseen material scale. This police system of the socio-oligarchy imprisons in iron chains any movement in favour of democratic freedoms and in defence of the people’s material interests. It chokes living thought and the will of the people to resist and struggle.

The shoots of dissidence, of resistance to the regime, of aspirations toward liberation that constantly appear in spite of this system of total repression are unable to develop significantly because there are no means for their penetration on a significant scale of public opinion, no space for the elaboration of ideological values, for criticism of current practice – there is no freedom of expression, of the press, of communication. Home-made methods – the publication of underground uncensored information, leaflets, literary works, etc. - as necessary as they are, can reach only hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people. But millions remain beyond the influence of the truthful word. They are deafened, blinded, made stupid by the phrases of official propaganda.

It is precisely in order to maintain the undivided domination of socio-oligarchic phraseology that the organs of the political police are combined with those of the ideological police. Any deviation of public thought or art from official stultified standards is considered dangerous sedition and almost always becomes the object of police repression. If the vital forces of literature, art, social science, tried to emerge from the underground, they would inevitably be stifled. Any case of expressed views that do not correspond to official standards, any dissidence, is persecuted with the help of an entire arsenal of repressive measures – from so-called self-criticism work-overs (condemnations at meetings, in the press, administrative reprisals) to harsh criminal prosecution (trials, prison and camp sentences, internal exile, incarceration of healthy people in psychiatric prison hospitals, deprivation of civil rights, etc. – in a word, the slow, painful murder of political opponents).

This “freezing” of spiritual and practical popular resistance to the socio-oligarchic regime is moreover also explained by numerous, unprecedentedly traumatic, historical experiences. Three generations (if one considers a generation to be 20-25 years) have known suffering, deprivations, sacrifices on a scale and level of severity never before experienced: the world wars, the revolution and civil war, the epidemic and famines of 1921, the terror against the intelligentsia, the collectivization and mass terror again the peasantry, the “dekulakization” of millions and the resulting death of millions from starvation, the mass purges of the black 1930s that achieved that which the combined reactionary forces of the entire world had not been able to do – the murder in Stalinist torture chambers and camps of almost the entire generation of Bolsheviks who had made the revolution -, the terror against Soviet soldiers returned from German captivity, the repression of the disgraced peoples and potential dissidents. This is a far from complete list of the physical, intellectual and moral losses borne by generations now living and active. It is a measure of the exhaustion of the people’s vital energies. These factors have given rise to moral fatigue in face of the need for historical action. This experience could not but fetter political action, undermine the will to resist and struggle for liberation from the socio-oligarchy.

All this forms the background of the feeble social resistance, of the weakness of the struggle of the toiling masses for their rights and interests that are being trampled by the socio-oligarchy. This is the main, decisive reason for the excruciatingly slow awakening to social and political activism, to the resurrection of professional-economic, political and socio-cultural defence of the people’s interests.

The socio-oligarchy is thus a distinct, historic economic, social, political and cultural structure, formed as a consequence of a so-to-speak non-classical historical process, one that was unforeseen by social science. It is a novel social formation that falls outside the general current of forward historical movement and that bears significant elements of parasitism and decay. This structure is an antagonistic, contradictory combination of a formally socialized base in the first stages of development (or the base of a transitional period) and the rule of a socio-oligarchy that parasitizes that base, appropriating for itself an increasingly larger part of the surplus product, and that increasingly deforms that base, orienting its evolution toward degeneration into a dead-end historical form that will inevitably fail to realize the socialist potential of the base undergoing deformation. The socio-oligarchy faces the real prospect of being pushed to the periphery of the historical process, having decisively failed in its utilization of the unprecedented potential for a very profound transformation of the productive forces and productive relations into socialist forms adequate to the scientific-technical revolution of the last decades of our century.

Does that mean that an historical dead-end of socio-oligarchism is not only possible but inevitable, that there is no alternative?

The question itself is incorrect. History does not know any path of movement that does not allow alternatives. The historical process is always the realization of only one of many possibilities. It results from the victorious struggle of one or another combination of forces, of factors, both objective and subjective, of forms both necessary and accidental, of spontaneous and conscious processes. And although socio-oligarchism’s degeneration into a dead-end form appears as a very real possibility, there are nevertheless alternative paths of historical development. These alternatives are deeply rooted in the internal and external contradictions of socio-oligarchism’s social structure and its interaction with the international environment, with the contemporary processes of development of the external world.

As a neo-exploitative structure, socio-oligarchism is characterized above all by very deep internal antagonism between the lower and the upper levels, between the toiling classes and the toiling intelligentsia, on the one hand, and the stratum of socio-oligarchs and the socio-oligarchic structure that is integrated and loyal to it, on the other. Objectively, regardless of whether they are conscious of it – and if they are conscious of it, then regardless of that consciousness – the basic interests of the lower levels are antagonistic to the interests of the socio-oligarchic stratum. This antagonism of fundamental interests constitutes a permanent, active contradiction of the entire socio-economic life of the socio-oligarchic regime and leaves its imprint on all its integral and partial, even accidental, processes and phenomena. It consists in the struggle between the socialist tendencies of the toiling masses and strata, on the one hand, and the socio-oligarchic, exploitative, usurpatory tendencies of the socio-oligarchs and of the entire socio-oligarchic structure, on the other. It therefore generates forces of resistance in the lower levels, develops their potential for struggle for their interests, and inevitably nurtures forces of opposition to the dominant system. And although at first they manifest themselves slowly, hesitantly, and sporadically, these forces must inevitably grow and develop, breaking through all the barriers erected on the path of their formation and realization by the practice of socio-oligarchism (from the masked nature of exploitation and the social demagogy to the total system of repression of dissidence).

These forces will inevitably be forced to seek, and in the end to find, forms of social and political action. Their imperious demands and mounting practical struggle will yet shake to its very foundations the whole edifice of socio-oligarchism, and, if the historical circumstances are favourable, they will destroy the whole vile, decaying regime. Such is the real socialist alternative to the socio-oligarchic dead-end.

Many powerful contemporary socio-cultural processes also contribute to the crystallization of forces of opposition and struggle inevitably generated by the deepening fundamental, inherent contradictions of socio-oligarchism. These are above all the rapid rise the general educational and cultural levels of the people. In the end, through all the zigzags of this process, this leads to the development of a sense of self-respect, to the broadening of the possibilities for individual self-determination, to the understanding that one’s real interest is inseparable from the interest of the society as a whole. It leads to immunity from socio-oligarchic phraseology and deception, from the mysticism of its false ideological values, from its manipulation and reduction of people to the role of mute puppets. The enlightened toiler who has thrown off the chain of ideological fetishes is transformed from a potential carrier of these interests into someone who fights for them. Education and enlightenment can be an impetus for participation in organized resistance to socio-oligarchy.

The scientific-technical revolution, the conditions it creates for the productive and socio-economic activity of the toilers, exerts a similar influence. The increasing liberation of workers from mechanical, routine functions (physical and intellectual), the progressive growth (and in the future - perhaps not too far off - the predominance) of creative functions, entail the necessity for the expansion of autonomous activity, for the free expression of the individual. That kind of activity is incompatible with dictate, with hierarchical-bureaucratic suppression of individuality, of creative initiative and responsibility. In the final analysis, the suppression of the creative roots of labour gives rise to an irreconcilable contradiction with the objective conditions of the functioning of the socio-productive and economic systems that are required by the scientific-technical revolution. The potential for autonomous activity and creativity being developed by the entire mechanism of functioning of contemporary productive forces, in the same way as rising levels of education and intellectual development, becomes a powerful motor of resistance to socio-oligarchy.

The external environment, the contemporary international scene and its influence on the regime, also contribute to the formation of individuals who are conscious of their real interests and of their opposition to the interests of the socio-oligarchy. This also promotes the transformation of people into forces of opposition.

The comprehensive, communicational unity of the world is becoming an irreversible and deeply active factor in the development of society, as well as in that of each individual member. Radio-jamming is helpless against modern electronic means of communication that provide access to the entire wealth of accumulated information in the world.

The expanding contacts of socio-oligarchic society with the outside world, in the form of personal contact (business trips abroad, scientific and cultural exchanges, tourism, etc.), act in the same way. The myths of socio-oligarchism are also being eroded under the influence of powerful currents of humanitarian culture and democracy in the West, as contradictory as these forms of influence are because of capitalist overlays and particular deformations linked with them.

What are the main, determining socio-historical tendencies of development that are generated by the profound antagonisms within socio-oligarchism and are being intensified by the aggregate of internal and external factors?

If we consider the most general, common and socially significant tendencies, we can name three: socialist, socio-oligarchic and socio-technocratic.

The socialist tendency flows objectively from the existence of a formally socialist basis (albeit one that is significantly deformed) and, consequently, from the interests of the toiling classes and the intelligentsia, whose vital activity is indissolubly linked to its functioning. This is the tendency to resolve the fundamental contradictions of socio-oligarchism by exploding the entire structure of that system, by liquidating the stratum of socio-oligarchs, overcoming the deformations of the socialist base and creating a superstructure adequate to that base – in other words, the establishment and development of a society of genuine socialism, in which national collectivism is combined with equality and democracy in production, in economic, political and socio-cultural relations and in which, therefore, the socialist character of the base would combine organically with the socialist character of the superstructure. “Socialism,” wrote Lenin, “is impossible without democracy in two senses: (1) the proletariat cannot accomplish the socialist revolution if it does not prepare itself for it through the struggle for democracy; (2) victorious socialism cannot defend its victory and lead humanity to the withering away of the state without fully realizing democracy.” (vol. 30, p. 128 – [Russian], *State and Revolution*?)

The socio-oligarchic tendency, on the other hand, has its objective roots in the domination of the socio-oligarchy and its self-seeking interests. This is the tendency for the conservation of socio-oligarchism, its political, economic and social consolidation, for overcoming its contradictions by its own methods of social demagoguery and totalitarian repression, combined with partial concessions, manoeuvering, bribery and the degeneration of the toilers, the isolation of the masses from the forces of opposition.

The socio-oligarchic tendency also develops into forms of caste-like consolidation of privilege of various kinds. The caste structure of the socio-oligarchy is multiform: the legal consolidation into castes of distinct, privileged élites, for example the top party and state functionaries (nomenklatura), the military, the police, and the “table of ranks” that embraces a widening circle of civil functions (diplomacy, justice) - this is the acquisition for life of bureaucratic-caste privileges and rights; the practically hereditary nature of positions in the oligarchy through unlimited advantages of nomenklatura children in higher education and career development under the unashamed care of fathers, who make use of their connections; widespread nepotism; marriage within the oligarchy; the accumulation of major consumer property, passed on by inheritance, and so forth. All this finally leads socio-oligarchism to a dead-end of historical stagnation, decay and degeneration.

The socio-technocratic tendency is, in fact, a particular manifestation of the socio-oligarchic tendency, one that is based on attempts by certain elements of the socio-oligarchy (which we can term “technocratic”) to adapt to the demands of the contemporary scientific-technical revolution by replacing the incompetent party-state élite of the socio-oligarchy currently at the feeding trough with the élite of the technocracy (economic and military), which is more modern and flexible, better adapted to contemporary production and military structures. This is a real prospect of usurpation of power by a particular bloc of the military and economic oligarchy. But this variant of socio-oligarchy suffers from essentially the same basic defects and contradictions as socio-oligarchism in general. And so, it is condemned to develop into the same historical dead-end, though perhaps more slowly.

The outcome of the struggle of these three tendencies of historical development depends on the energy of their agents, on the force of manifestation of various subjective factors and the historical chances of success of their realization, on the ability to exploit a favourable combination of these chances.

This is the historical background that shapes the struggle for the victory of the socialist tendency by the bloc of social forces hostile to socio-oligarchism inevitably generated by the antagonisms examined above. The more conscious the action of that bloc, the clearer its understanding of the path to the conquest of genuine socialism, to the liquidation of its ulcers and deformations, the greater is ability to communicate this knowledge to the broad masses of the toiling people, the more favourable will be the prospects for its struggle and the greater the chance of victory.

2. The Genesis
of Socio-oligarchism

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By its historical content and significance – the nature of its motive forces, the essence of the authority it created, the direction it imparted to the socio-economic development of the country, its impact on the world-historical process – the Revolution of October 1917 was a Great Socialist Proletarian Revolution.

But is that assessment justified in light of more than half a century of experience, in light of the indisputable fact of the degeneration of the socio-economic structure created by that revolution into socio-oligarchism, the antithesis of socialism, of socialist democracy ? Were the assessments of the social-democratic critics of Bolshevism - Kautsky, Plekhanov, Martov and many others - not then realistic ? As we know, they saw the October Revolution as a blanquist miscarriage of history that condemned Lenin and the Bolsheviks to total defeat in their fight for socialist goals. Or were the assessments made by the revolution’ bourgeois critics correct ? They saw in the October Revolution a purely Russian phenomenon, a constellation of circumstances that arose from defeat in war: the decay of Tsarism, of the feudal-capitalist élite of society, destruction, hunger, the spontaneous indignation of ignorant, embittered popular masses, a new paroxysm of the age-old struggle of peasants for land, the contradictions between the oppressed and oppressor nations of the empire – all that is said to have pushed Russia into the arms of an arbitrary dictatorship that was very far from socialism.

Was not October, as some historical economists think, in its essence a peasant revolution, a new explosion of the centuries-old struggle of the peasants for land and freedom combined with elements of a premature proletarian revolution, the latter possessing incomparably less potential as a motive force and so incapable of determining the general socio-historical content of October, but dressing it up ideologically in a proletarian socialist garb? And did not October remain, even in this garb, in essence and in its unfolding, a revolution of Russian peasants ?

In light of the historical experience, these and similar questions are not without serious substance. Nevertheless, we still support the conception of the October Revolution as a socialist revolution. But how does that fit with the historical result to which Russia came, to the establishment of socio-oligarchism?

Under the thunderous blows of the all-Russian cataclysm, on the ruins of Tsarism, swept away by the spontaneous explosion of the February Revolution, in conditions of confused and fruitless wavering on the part of the governing bloc of the urban bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, incapable of solving any of the urgent problems on which the country’s salvation depended, a political bloc formed of workers, soldiers, most of the peasantry (mainly small and medium-holders), of urban toilers and a certain part of the democratic intelligentsia, under the leadership of the socialist party of Bolsheviks. This bloc formed with unusual speed, even by the standards of a revolutionary period. In the few months between February and October 1917, this bloc became the defining force, the one that carried out the October insurrection. The nature of the revolution is unmistakably clear from the aggregate of decisive events.

In the first place, the bloc of toilers and other social strata under the hegemony of the proletariat, and its party, the workers’ party of Bolsheviks, became the ruling party.

In the second place, this was a popular revolution in the precise sense of the term (and not a blanquist coup). This is demonstrated by the rapid, almost bloodless (or, as in the case of Moscow, with little bloodshed) victory of the new authority across the vast territory of the Russian empire. It was demonstrated by the amazing victory won by this government of an exhausted, impoverished, starving, but unflinchingly revolutionary people in four excruciating years of war and struggle against both Western and Eastern interventionists. This would have been completely impossible had the revolution not been a genuinely popular one, had the government it created not been truly, solidly and patiently supported by the popular masses that followed it.

In the third place, the government created by the revolution was by its nature a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat. It was a dictatorship inasmuch as it relied on direct force that was not tied to law. It was a proletarian dictatorship since it was being conducted by the party of the proletariat and by the Soviet government, created by the workers, peasants and soldiers. It was a democratic dictatorship since it relied on direct democracy from bottom to top, on the stable, long-term political mobilization of revolutionary popular masses.

In the fourth place, in a short period, in a single blow, it solved the fundamental task of the socialist revolution: it expropriated the big and middle bourgeoisie and transformed the determining means of production and exchange into the people’s common property. With the creation of a socialist structure of the national economy the period of transition to socialism began.

In the fifth place, the other tasks at which the bourgeois-democratic revolution had failed were just as radically accomplished: the uncompromising purge of the remnants of feudalism and Tsarism: landlord property and cultivation were liquidated; the land was divided up among the peasants (“socialization”); the estate system and the apparatus of Tsarist rule were destroyed; feudal-imperialist colonial oppression of peoples of the empire ceased, and so forth.

In the sixth place, a beginning was made, in conditions of extreme rarity of resources, in improving the life of toilers; a cultural revolution unfolded.

In the seventh place, although the October Revolution was the only victorious proletarian revolution in the postwar world, shaken in the first several years by waves of revolutionary mobilizations and explosions of proletarian revolutions, it nevertheless had a huge, lasting impact on the world revolutionary process, on the course of world history.

The solution of all these tasks (except for the general bourgeois-democratic one that was specific to the peasant revolution) went beyond the framework of even the most radical peasant-democratic revolution. Taken together, they constitute the classical content of a proletarian-socialist revolution. This is the proof that the October Revolution, by the character of its determining motive forces and its socio-historical significance, and not merely by the consciousness of its actors, its ideological garb or other fleeting political forms, was a socialist revolution. The peasantry was indeed one of the powerful motive forces of the revolution, but only as an ally to the determining force, which was the proletariat – the real and unique hegemonic force of that revolution. For that reason it was a socialist revolution – in its social content, political forms, and historical mission. Of course, it was all intertwined with many historical features specific to Russia that left their profound mark on the entire revolutionary process. But they did not alter its essence.

What historically objective alternatives of socio-political development did the revolution open? What contradictions did these possibilities contain? What social forces stood behind each alternative?

There were objectively possible three fundamentally different paths of socio-political development, three types of socio-historical structure of post-revolutionary society:

-- a consistently socialist path: creation of the economic, social and political systems of socialism; socialist transformation of social relations; consolidation of a developed democracy of a classless society;

--t he path of bourgeois restoration through defeat of the proletarian dictatorship in the civil war; or, in the process of evolution of the transitional relations, restoration of capitalism in one or another political form (bourgeois-democratic, fascist-dictatorial, military-dominated);

-- consolidation of socio-oligarchism – the establishment of a formally socialist base but the defeat working-class efforts to create an adequate socialist democratic superstructure; degeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the party over the proletariat and other toilers; the transformation of the latter into a personal dictatorship and the consolidation of socio-oligarchism.

In real history, the second path, that of bourgeois restoration, turned out to be unviable. Russia’s weak bourgeoisie was broken in the civil war and unable subsequently to exercise any significant, direct influence on the course of socio-political development of the country. (Indirectly, however, its armed opposition to the revolution, the long and bitter civil war it unleashed, did have a major influence.)

The struggle over the course of a half century took place, and is taking place, between two historical alternatives: the socialist and the socio-oligarchic.

What are the objective historical factors, the historical potentials, on which the socialist alternative rested? These included:

-- the victory of the revolution itself and the establishment of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, led by the Marxist workers’ party of Bolsheviks;

-- the victory of the new government in the civil war and in the armed struggle against the intervention, ruling out the military restoration of capitalism;

-- the political bloc of the popular majority, whose power and reliability was demonstrated by the civil-war victory: it was this alliance of the working class and peasantry that created the objective possibility of realizing in consistently democratic forms the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism;

-- the revolutionary scale of popular socio-political creativity, the spontaneous development of forces of direct democracy;

-- the important and constantly growing role of trade unions, their real socio-political influence; the development of democratic, autonomous peasant organization, the peasantry’s civic activeness;

-- the resolution of the national question and the creation of a union of national state formations; the development of national autonomy and self-government;

-- the historically unprecedented, in pace and scope, educational advancement of the popular masses; the creation of a popular intelligentsia: in sum, an unprecedented, genuine cultural revolution;

-- the new economic policy, whose success exceeded all expectations, and which objectively could have been supplemented with a new policy of creating of a democratic state structure and democratic forms and institutions of civil society, as a transition to socialism;

-- the postwar revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat of the capitalist countries; support on the part of the world proletariat and democratic strata of the West for the revolution in Russia;

-- the existence of an experienced workers’ party of Bolshevik Marxists, tested in the revolution and civil war.

Together these were powerful factors, real social potentials for victory of a socialist, democratic alternative. But that was only one alternative, The other alternative won out in the end, the establishment of socio-oligarchism.

Among the fundamental factors and social forces that opened the way for it were :

-- above all, the fact that the proletarian revolution took place in a peasant country, where the benighted, backward, patriarchal and semi-patriarchal peasantry made up four fifths of the population, while the proletariat was relatively small (especially its settled, urbanized stratum). This peasant sea created dangerous tension in the new post-revolutionary structure of Soviet society. The peasantry, tied by a thousand threads to the proletariat (many workers had previously been peasants), exercised a petty-bourgeois anti-socialist influence. The peasant human material (in terms of its socio-historical and psychological make-up) was excellent raw material for the future socio-oligarchic structure;

-- the fundamentally important fact that Russia was a country that had not undergone any, even very basic, school of political democracy, that the people had not known democratic institutions. Tsarist-Asiatic ideology, according to which the individual is insignificant and without rights, while the élites are despotically omnipotent and free of any control from below, was inculcated over the course of centuries; it could not but undermine the effect of the few months of bourgeois-democratic order ushered in by the February Revolution. The brief period of practical proletarian popular power was not consistent and was oddly linked with hypertrophied state coercion, mass punitive measures, and terroristic reprisals (the execution of hostages, the destruction of insurgent villages, mass cruel extralegal persecution of alien class elements, often on the sole suspicion of hostile activity or even of statements that were uttered), the arbitrariness and petty tyranny of authorities, the unbridled militaristic-bureaucratic ordering about of the masses, etc. In a word, that fact that Russia made a proletarian revolution without having gone through the great school of political democracy was another serious contradiction of its socialist transformation.

The fact that the overwhelming mass of the population had not been firmly educated in the rights of the individual, had not experienced the value of individual rights and the supremacy of law, had tragic significance. The individual in Russia remained an amorphous element of the peasant commune, or, in the cities, of the estate or rank. The individual had not yet had the time necessary to break patriarchal ties with the peasant village community, the estate, or bureaucratic class.

This individual, uneducated to his rights, had been taught for centuries to bear with humility and in silence his lack of rights and to cringe before the arbitrary power of authority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, even in the more democratic forms of its first years, was not in essence an instrument for establishment the rule of law and a law-based state. The very logic of the struggle, as we will show presently, forced it systematically and brutally to flout elementary legal standards, and with that to suppress consciousness of the rights if the individual.

The next factor – in order of presentation but not in terms of its really decisive role – is that the party of Bolsheviks, formed in conditions of Tsarist absolutism and preparing for its overthrow, adopted in those conditions a rather abstract, simplistic - one might even say historically light-hearted - attitude to the problem of political democracy. In practice the party did not see or understand that real socialism is impossible without political democracy (despite verbal declarations to that effect). The party did not really grasp (jumping ahead, we can say that this is a major lesson of the half-century of subsequent history) that one must not confuse the instrument of political democracy with the specific bourgeois forms of its application, that the instrument must remain even while these forms are shed. It is as necessary an achievement of civilization, as, say, machine production. Without preserving this instrument and the socialist forms of its application, the transformation of productive relations alone cannot create socialism.

Lenin more than once analyzed the problem of “democracy and socialism,” in particular in *State and Revolution*,but he was not able to pose it in historically real terms as the problem of the political mechanism for harmonizing, balancing the interests of diverse strata of socialist society and for the exclusion of the re-emergence of particular interests of a ruling stratum. He fell victim to illusions, utopian dreams about everyone (“every cook”) being able to manage the state and actually doing it, and that the removability of functionaries and their remuneration at the level of the average wage of workers were protection from bureaucracy - as if that was the real essence of the problem and its resolution.

The internal problems and difficulties on the path to socialist development were closely linked with equally difficult external problems. The Bolsheviks undertook the October insurrection convinced that it would be merely the first act of a world socialist revolution, that the Russian revolution would immediately open the way to revolution in Europe, at least in Germany, Austro-Hungary, and perhaps also in the camp of victorious states. This calculation did not materialize. Russian remained the only country in which the revolution was victorious and it was surrounded on all side by capitalist countries. The necessity of building socialism in one country, in a backward one to boot, generated deep contradictions and difficulties in the unfolding of this historically unprecedented process.

The unprecedented difficulties of Russian revolution’s development were compounded many times over by the four-year civil war, the foreign intervention that led to an almost total paralysis of the economy, to hunger, cold, epidemic, mass banditry, an international economic boycott, and much else.

The regime of war communism, of the “besieged-fortress,” that was forced on the revolution inevitably created a tendency to the hypertrophy of coercive-dictatorial forms of state power. The monopoly of a single party after the liquidation of the activity of opposition parties eliminated the limits to absolute power, and so to arbitrary rule. The basic freedoms – of conscience, speech, press, mass action, strikes, etc. – were suppressed. The dictatorship lost step by step its democratic forms, and direct popular democracy, the revolutionary flood of socio-political creativity of the masses, was undermined, wilted and died. Military-bureaucratic command of the masses that relied on naked coercion expanded to gradually embrace all levels of the social structure. The growing malignant tumour of bureaucracy that stifled the vital political activity of the masses threatened the very foundations of socialist development.

Red terror, a necessary response to white terror, had fateful political consequences for the revolution, because of its impact on social psychology. It elevated force and coercion to an absolute, totally undermining the foundations of rule of law. In the course of the struggle, the dictatorship of coercion became total; the rule of law was thrown overboard as an unneeded hindrance.

The war, the harsh, desperate struggle on the fronts against the internal and external forces of restoration that were strangling the proletarian republic, alongside the mass heroism and the tremendous upsurge of selfless popular commitment, sacrifice and spiritual force, also fostered the government’s militarism, the militarization of the party itself, of its cadres, including the cadres of seasoned revolutionaries. Autonomous revolutionary activity and the democratic values of the members gave way to militaristic, bureaucratic automatism, automatic subordination. The adhesion of hundreds of thousands, and later millions, of new members who had not gone through the revolutionary-democratic school created new fertile ground for barrack-style subordination and action.

A vastly expanded state apparatus, parasitizing the poverty, ignorance and destruction, grew tremendously under the influence of hyper-centralism and rationing, while taking on large numbers of the old tsarist personnel. The state apparatus became even more bureaucratized than the party apparatus. The absence of any legal opposition, the suppression of manifestations of political criticism, the elimination of any means of expression (in print, at meetings), the suppression of opposition within the party itself – all this removed any remaining obstacles on the road to all-embracing bureaucratism, arbitrary rule, unlimited coercion of the toiling masses.

Lenin’s formula of workers’ power but with a “bureaucratic deformation” expressed only half of the truth, concealing the real situation. The bureaucratic militaristic forces in the party and state went well beyond the framework of “bureaucratic deformations”. They gave rise to a new social process – the formation of a bureaucratic stratum feeding at the trough of state power, a stratum that had thoroughly embraced the ideology of the omnipotent bureaucratic militaristic machine and was deeply intoxicated with its practice of unlimited power, arbitrary discretion, disregard for rights, for all legal principle. Trotsky’s views on the transition from war to peace were symptomatic – the “militarization” of the economy, of the trade unions, etc.

These tendencies gathered special strength towards the end of the civil war. It was at this time that the consequences of the mass social decomposition of all strata of the working class, the physical loss of its cadres on the fronts, the apathy, fatigue and outright physical exhaustion of people were fully felt. Meanwhile, the mass outpouring of counterrevolutionary sentiment among the peasantry made clear the depth of the crisis of its alliance with the working class.

All this merely reinforced the omnipotence of the élite. It was combined with the preservation and integrity, with the absolute inviolability, of the apparatus of coercion and mass terror, whose cadres had managed, thanks to the logic of continuous mass reprisals, to degenerate considerably into a sort of “red *oprichnina*”, a political police force devoid of ideology – a loyal pillar of the rule of the party-state bureaucracy. True, this force exploited the familiar romantic tradition, the pathos of the revolutionary self-defence of the early period of the proletarian state, and continued to drape itself in *chekist* clothing of “knights of the revolution.”

A social psychology developed that justified mass coercion in all and every realm of life, mass repression to forestall potential resistance. The individual, never highly valued in Russia, was completely stifled. The sadistic, unrestricted firing squad replaced law and trials. Law was replaced with reprisals, scantily adorned with a veil of “revolutionary conscience” and “revolutionary legality”, which in the best of cases were guided by blind class hatred.

The armed fratricidal class war and terror that flooded the country – both white and red – gave rise to unheard-of cruelty, to the violation and trampling underfoot of the individual, of his dignity. Unconditional approval by the élite of mass reprisals became a social norm, even when its victims became the toiling classes themselves, and especially the intelligentsia. The poetess Anna Akhmatova brilliantly formulated the worldview of that period: “I paid for love in cash; I stood twenty years under the barrel of a revolver.”

In these hopelessly difficult circumstances at the end of the civil war, full of tragedy and profound historical contradictions, lie the origins of socio-oligarchism. But the time for the socio-oligarchy’s rule had not yet come. The first several years after the end of the civil war are the historical period of the decisive struggle of the two alternatives, of the two paths of development of post-revolutionary society: the socialist democratic path and the socio-oligarchic.

The historically real possibility of victory of the first alternative over the opposing forces and conditions was based on powerful social factors. The country emerged brilliantly from the crisis of the war-communist economy in the course of some mere 18-24 months, thanks to the consistently applied New Economic Policy. The alliance of the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia, which had been under threat, had not only survived the crisis, but had grown even stronger on the new economic foundation. This was a direct result of the fact that the toiling classes and social strata, in conditions of a correct policy (the New Economic Policy, NEP), were both materially and socially interested in the preservation of Soviet power and the socialist path of development. The socialist economic structure that had arisen constituted a real basis for socialist transformation of society. The socialist messianic ideology, born of the revolution and tempered in the furnace of the civil war and in the struggle against the intervention, served as an added impulse to this development.

The social forces and the objective tendencies of socialist democratic development were not merely some sort of amorphous factors of a potentially possible future process. Although the degeneration of significant strata of the ruling party had progressed far on the way to their becoming a kind of pre-socio-oligarchy, the party still had in its ranks powerful forces willing and able to support a socialist democratic path of development and to fight against the threat of socio-oligarchic degeneration. There is much that attests to this: Lenin`s position in the last years of his life – he saw the danger of degeneration and thought about measures to prevent it; the position of the Bolshevik Leninist cadres who had preserved their socialist revolutionary conditioning; the Trotskyist opposition; the workers’ opposition; the Democratic Centralists, and others. Even though all this was contradictory, it nevertheless reveals the existence of such forces.

Of course, the challenge before them was tremendous – it was the equivalent of NEP, only in the political sphere. For the socialist democratic path to be realized, NEP had to be supplemented with a radical transformation of the political superstructure that had formed during the period of war communism. It required the creation of a democratic regime that, on the basis of popular mandate obtained in competition with other parties, would genuinely represent and defend the interests of all social forces that supported socialism, a regime that guaranteed their interests with effectively functioning institutions.

In sum, the new economic policy had to be supplemented and organically combined with a new policy of radically democratic power, the dictatorship of the proletariat reconstructed on the basis of parliamentary-representative forms, with the free competition of parties that stood on socialist platforms, freedom of expression, of mass political action of the population, freedom of the press, etc. Only thus could the development of socio-oligarchism have been averted.

But groups had already been formed that stood in the way of such development: the carriers of socio-oligarchic tendencies, the significant strata that had been administering the proletarian dictatorship, which already to a significant degree had lost its democratic forms and been transformed into a dictatorship over the proletariat by the ruling party. This was the already-crystallized power pushing the country onto the path of socio-oligarchism. In other words, it (the dictatorship over the proletariat) already possessed a more-or-less crystallized social stratum as a supporting base: a significant part of the bureaucratic militaristic power élite that relied upon a powerful, disciplined, unreservedly obedient and experienced apparatus of mass coercion, one that was cynically immoral and cared nothing for legal norms.

And so, for a time, there existed a certain equilibrium between two forces that represented profoundly antagonistic interests: the socialist bloc of the working class, toiling peasantry and intelligentsia, on the one hand; and a significant part of the bureaucratic, militaristic power élite that had crystallized into a distinct social stratum.

Each tendency had a certain chance of victory; either could have become reality. It all depended on which of the forces, temporarily in unsteady balance and clashing in conditions that made the outcome unpredictable, would get the upper hand. Here, much, if not everything (as usually happens in real history), was decided by the accidental confluence of concrete historical factors: the type of historical actors at the helm of power, their ability and intention of harnessing the objective possibilities of development, their understanding of the social forces of inertia and their ability to oppose them, the levers of power available to then, and so forth.

At that very moment, when the objective possibilities of development crossed paths with the accidental impact of the actors of the historical process, whose activity could transform these possibilities into reality, at the moment when the outcome of the struggle of opposing forces was being decided, the Russian revolution fatally ran out of luck. Historical accident played a tragic role in the destiny of the Russian revolution, dealing it an unfortunate change of leaders at the decisive moment: the death of Lenin and the advent of Stalin to absolute power.

Lenin, who had embraced the great decision to introduce NEP, clearly saw the political and social threat of bureaucratic militaristic degeneration. (All available documents and materials attest to this.) Perhaps one day it will become known that he was preparing a new democratic policy, a radical reform of the structure and form of power that would have supplemented and completed the NEP and ensure the socialist democratic path of development. But in any case, if Lenin was ready to do that, death prevented it.

Stalin was flesh of the flesh of the bureaucratic militaristic apparatus. One cannot say that he consciously moved toward a personal dictatorship. (At least, we have no documents to show that; in any case, it has no great significance.) What was decisive was that he was the perfect representative of the bureaucratic militaristic methods that had developed in the period of war communism and that issued from it. Stalin’s faith, his entire political wisdom, consisted in driving the country with “barbaric methods” (direct, unbridled terror) “from barbarism to the heights of socialist progress.” Relying on the socio-oligarchic stratum that had just come into being, and in full command of the coercive apparatus, Stalin set these methods in motion on an unprecedented scale and with unprecedented cruelty.

Leaders and strata of the élite, who would have been capable of leading socialist democratic development and opposing socio-oligarchic tendencies, were quickly and easily swept from the political area. After that, the self-reproducing, unstoppable and ever-expanding socio-oligarchic tendency continued its progress.

The apparatus of power became increasingly centralized and bureaucratized, rooting out with an iron hand any vestiges of democratism. The oligarcho-bureaucratic forces and tendencies quickly and self-confidently consolidated themselves. Nevertheless, for a certain time, the activity of the apparatus of power was directed at realizing the objectively socialist task of creating the material basis of socialism: the development of socialized industry (industrialization of the country); socialization of the peasant economy and the creation of a modern technical foundation for it; socialization of exchange; squeezing out of the exploiter elements of town and country. But these socialist tasks were being decided by socio-oligarchic methods. The toiling classes were transformed step by step from subjects of historical action, from revolutionary creators and participants in socialist relations, as they had emerged from the furnace of the revolution, into objects of brutal, bureaucratic, totalitarian coercion. Industry was being created at the price of an unlimited offensive against the toilers’ living standards, of squandering the forces, health and lives of toilers that can only be compared to the exploits of the primitive capital accumulation of capital.

All manifestations of protest were suppressed. A mass punitive policy was launched against the working class and peasantry. The apogee of police-terrorist violence was reached in the process of forced socialization of the peasant economy, with the vicious and bloody baiting of one social stratum against the other. The so-called “revolution from above,” allegedly supported “from below” by the peasantry, was in fact the historically unprecedented extermination of a large part of one`s own people, a bloody orgy of really apocalyptic dimensions. Mass terror, deportation and physical destruction of millions of peasants (so-called “liquidation of the kulaks as a class”), the ruin of millions of other peasants condemned to a hungry death – such was the violent revenge of the Stalinist oligarch-bureaucracy against the peasantry. The “socialist” transformation of the countryside, the collectivization of the Russian *muzhik*, was paid for with hecatombs of corpses, rivers of blood, burnt and deserted villages, abandoned land, fields left fallow, as after the Tatar raids.

The socio-oligarchic way of resolving contradictions of transitional economics in an economically backward country, as Russia was during the NEP, was to blame for all these tragic events. One can distinguish three basic contradictions of that period.

In the first place, the country, to which the October Revolution had imparted a powerful impulse of socialist transformation, objectively had to create a modern industrial potential in a very short historical period through the mobilization of all human and material resources. Without that it was not only impossible to accomplish the socialist transformation of the country, but the real threat of loss of sovereignty also hung over it. It is obvious that the realization of such a grandiose task required the maximal application of popular energies. There were two alternative paths to that: a socialist democratic one, based on the unleashing popular, revolutionary-democratic initiative, activeness, socialist self-sacrifice (as one can observe in periods of national catastrophe, as in the civil war and later in the war against fascism), or, as did in fact occur, the path of socio-oligarchic coercion.

Secondly, the peasant represented a profound contradiction of the period. It was a class of toilers that moved in union with the working class toward the construction of socialism, but at the same time a class of petty-commodity producers that embraced freedom of the market, profit, and hung onto them. It tried to use bread and other food products that the country needed as a means to pump out extra benefit for itself at the expense of the cities. Even this contradiction could have been overcome with a socialist democratic policy of rational equivalent exchange. But it was resolved in a socio-oligarchic manner through brutal violence against the peasants (extraordinary measures, dekulakization, forced collectivization).

Thirdly, there was a contradiction in the fact that NEP opened the floodgates to the growth of a NEP-bourgeoisie and kulak class with anti-socialist tendencies and a long-term perspective of bourgeois restoration. But that contradiction also could have been overcome, either with a socialist democratic policy designed to answer the question of “who will beat whom” by ensuring the economic supremacy of the socialist economic mode over the bourgeois-kulak mode, or, as did happen, through socio-oligarchic, administrative, terroristic violence against the NEP bourgeoisie and the kulaks.

All these means of socio-oligarchic resolution of the contradictions of the economy of NEP were not, of course, without a direct relation to the fate of socio-oligarchism: as soon as they were put into motion they imparted a powerful impulse to the growth of the forces of socio-oligarchism, to its ultimate maturation and the consolidation of its characteristic forms, both political and socio-economic.

In the course of the terroristic onslaught of police-militaristic, oligarcho-bureaucratic action of social transformation, the socio-oligarchic tendency of development gained force and became ever more pervasive. The bureaucratic militaro-police apparatus of dictatorship over the people assumed a more permanent form, grew and became definitively hostile to the toilers. At the same time, and especially as a consequence, the transformation of the élite of this apparatus into a stratum of socio-oligarchs hostile and opposed to the people made gigantic strikes.

The people were poor and hungry. The working class had its belt pulled tight; wages were reduced to pre-revolutionary levels. The peasantry was starving, dying by the millions, abandoned to its fate by the regime. (The famine in Ukraine of 1932/33 took seven million lives. This tragedy was recounted by Vaslilii Grossman in his novella-pamphlet *Everything Flows*. Its merciless truth evokes a sense of horror that freezes the readers’ blood at this hellish nightmare created by subhumans. The facts of this unimaginable, inconceivable tragedy are presented with the exactitude of a record of court proceedings in the memoirs of Khrushchev. But no one has yet told the story of the millions of peasants who perished when forcibly driven to Siberia.)

At the same time, in the course of a few short years (from the late 1920s to the early 1930s) the ruling party-bureaucratic élite makes the leap from the stoic self-limitation, the asceticism of the 1920s, to a bourgeois mode of life in its most vulgar, nouveau-riche forms: real incomes grow to excess, surpassing workers’ wages dozens of times; special rations, canteens, shops, country homes, villas, vacation resorts, personal cars, yachts, very expensive leisure activities, hunting, travel, special schools and even universities, special hospitals and even special cemeteries – all that separates the élite from the people, but at the people`s expense and opposed to the people. It is a genuine feast in time of plague – the disaster of a people suffering from hunger and cold.

The social stratum that had developed from a privileged party-state apparatus into a developed socio-oligarchy was busy consolidating its generous share of the state pie, onto which it held so tightly.

And here again, history got busy, providing the socio-oligarchy with an apparatus of mass violence. In the bloody madness of Stalinist social transformations, this apparatus swelled more and more, transforming itself once again, this time into Stalin`s own *oprichnina*, having completely shed any remnants of the red *chekist* hue with which it had been covering itself.

What an unimaginable path of mass butchery, violence against millions, the destruction of millions and millions of lives from all classes and strata of the population – that is the path this apparatus travelled in the course of one single decade! The early the 1920s: repression of the remnants of the old Russian bourgeois classes and of out-of-favour strata of the population: the nobility, the bourgeoisie, the white officers, the Cossaks, the Eastern national minorities. The mid 1920s – broadening repression against the intelligentsia, peasants opposing the “emergency measures”, and finally the political-police repression of the opposition within the party itself (police liquidation of the Trotskyists, the Right, the national-deviationists – jail, internal exile, murder), as well as of any other dissidence, especially on grounds of religious practice, including harsh repression of religious sectarians. The end of the 1920s and early 1930s (which we have already mentioned): repression of millions Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Caucasian, Central-Asian and other peasants. In the frenzy of the anti-peasant orgy, the process of formation of an apparatus of a specifically socio-oligarchic character is completed.

But the historical significance of these processes is much greater. The fact is that, with this social plowing up of the country with the aid of mass terror, the bureaucratic-militaristic élite of the party and state becomes intertwined with the élite of the gigantic repressive apparatus and is definitively transformed into a socio-oligarchy characterized by a socio-oligarchic structure. The dictatorship of the party over the proletariat becomes the personal dictatorship of Stalin, which expresses and defends the interests of the new parasitic-exploiting ruling stratum of the regime of socio-oligachism.

It was not thus Stalin who initiated, created and imposed the socio-oligarchy. On the contrary, the socio-oligarchy was formed as the end results of a process resulting from the inertia of the post-revolutionary historical process of development of the militaristic-bureaucratic tendency. Stalin latched onto the latter and saddled it (after the death of Lenin, who, in one way or another, had resisted that tendency). And it in turn transformed Stalin into an autocratic dictator – a product and tool of the socio-oligarchy. All that, however, did not by a long shot complete the historical martyrology of socio-oligarchic consolidation. Having given birth to the personal dictatorship of Stalin, the socio-oligarchy opened a most bloody page of its own history. The personal dictatorship, having become a political reality, has its own laws of consolidation and functioning.

It requires a monolithic base of support. The child of socio-oligarchism, the personal dictatorship must become the latter’s demiurge, its all-powerful creator. Only by its own hand may the socio-oligarchy be granted favour; and so the old cadres of socio-oligarchs had to be removed from the political arena. They were condemned to merciless destruction because they – hundreds of thousands of old communists who had made the revolution and defended it in armed struggle -- still retained significant links with the people. For that might cause them to waver, to refuse support to the dictator. And such wavering really did occur, reflecting the underlying dissatisfaction of the masses, although it was deeply concealed from any outside view. And so the personal dictatorship of socio-oligarchism required different human material than that which had been inherited from the revolution and civil war. It needed material of the obedient, professionally trained, careerist variety, that was prepared to serve the deified dictator sincerely and blindly. And such material was abundantly available in the sons of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie that had already been brought up in conditions of socio-oligarchism.

To this one must add that socio-oligarchy, by the very mechanism of its rule, requires conditions of terroristic intimidation of the people. It requires the propagation and cultivation of myths about carriers of imagined threats, about internal enemies, toward whom popular dissatisfaction can be channelled as the alleged sources of all their troubles.

Thus, the terroristic replacement of the old human material of socio-oligarchism that had given birth to the personal dictator (afterwards hypocritically denoted by the unctuously servile term “personality cult of Stalin”).

The period of 1934-1939 (its culmination was reached in 1937, one of the most bloody and evil landmarks of human history) was that in which the Stalinist terror apparatus, by the direct instigation and under the direct leadership of the dictator, shot, tortured, let rot in prisons and concentration camps, anathematized as “enemies of the people,” millions of communists, people who had prepared and made the revolution, who had fought and won the war against the bourgeois-aristocratic counterrevolution and the intervention and then, by the will of historical fate, carried out the socio-oligarchic industrialization and collectivization and by their own hands helped establish the Stalinist dictatorship. A somber, devilish historical tragedy took place. Attila, Chengiz Khan, Ivan the Terrible, the inquisitors of the world over – they all did not come near Stalin in his bloody deeds of mass extermination. The Soviet people and people around the world were astounded by Stalin’s bloody massacre of millions of his own confederates and allies. This destruction seemed senseless. They were frozen in their ignorance but could not but sense the irrationality of what was occurring, its incompatibility with the most basic principles of humanist European civilization, with the morals that make civilized society possible.

Only the terroristic practice of hitlerite fascism before the war and the mass genocide of wartime were analogous to what occurred in Stalin’s empire. (Future researchers will find many kindred traits and mutual influences in these two socially antagonistic systems.)

From an historical point of view, the socio-political significance of Stalin’s terroristic coup was that it allowed the personal dictatorship to shed the cocoon in which it had formed: the masses of old party members who had become socio-oligarchs, the old and best working-class and intellectual militants who had been drawn into political life in the waves of revolution, were destroyed and replaced by cadres of mainly peasant and petty-bourgeois origin, careerist time-servers who wielded power by the grace of the dictator. The old cadres fell physical victim to the personal socio-oligarchic dictatorship; the new cadres were the latter’s consolidated social base – voiceless, blindly obedient tools, devoid of ideology, ready for anything, militarily drilled, professionally instructed, unthinking, endlessly devoted to the dictator – the trained, vengeful tool of his political action.

Stalin’s terroristic dictatorship, socio-oligarchic in its socio-historical significance, was the tragically dismal, irrational result of the first quarter century of development of the processes of degeneration of the Russian revolution, processes that contradicted the latter’s most innermost significance and predestination. The socio-oligarchic tendency had definitively won out.

The entire following three decades of the history of socio-oligarchism is a chain of unending repression of the peoples of the country, the further evolution of the socio-oligarchic structure, adorned, moreover, with peasant-petty-bourgeois misanthropy, hopeless narrow-mindedness, obtuse chauvinism, anti-semitism, contempt for genuine spirituality and culture, for the values of world civilization, and with servility oddly combined with boorish rudeness. These are the inherent psychological traits, inculcated over centuries of slavery, of the human material of socio-oligarchism.

Of course, the great force of the socialist basis, even if the latter is only formal in nature, was, and is, that, despite the fetters of socio-oligarchism and in opposition to it, it still contains within itself powerful impulses to historical action. The titanic struggle of the Soviet people in the world war against Hitlerism and its victory in that war, despite the short-sightedness, the miscalculation and the criminally senseless actions of Stalin and his entourage that cost the people millions of unnecessarily sacrificed lives – those were the result of the combination of the powerful socialist impulse of the people’s fight against the aggressors, the class enemies, with the impulse for national self-preservation. The rapid postwar economic recovery was also a manifestation of the forces of the socialized basis.

But the socio-oligarchy, the Stalinist dictatorship, continues to weigh upon, to crush and violate this basis, to stifle the vital popular forces. During the war the apparatus of violence was again working at full force. Its victims were entire peoples (mass deportation, deprivation of civil rights and even physical destruction of Volga Germans, of the Kalmyks, the Crimean Tatars, the Chechens, the Ingush, and other Caucasian peoples). Bestial black-hundred anti-semitism – mass arrest and destruction of the intelligentsia of Jewish origin (the case of the Jewish Anti-fascist Committee, the doctors’ plot, the annihilation of Jewish writers, artists and highly skilled members of many professions, the multi-varied forms of economic and socio-cultural discrimination that affected the youth especially painfully); terroristic reprisal against the millions prisoners of war returning from fascist captivity; their internment over long periods in concentration camps; mass arrests and lifetime internal exile of former prisoners of the devilish 1934-1939 period; the *zhdanovshchina* in literature and art, and science; the cultivation of chauvinism and jingoism, of xenophobia; the Beria-Abakumov practice of preventive repression of representative of all strata of the people and of national minorities, etc. – such was the hopeless reality of the dictatorship of Stalin in the postwar years, of the regime of socio-oligarchism in its “mature” form.

The country gasped for breath and stumbled. The death of the dictator allowed a limited release of the valves. The terroristic extremes of socio-oligarchism were liquidated. But the system as a whole – the economic, social, political, socio-cultural system – remained untouched. We have already spoken about its essence and problems.

3. On the Socialist Alternative
to Socio-oligarchism

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Resolution of the major contradictions of socio-oligarchism, the way out of the socio-historical impasse to which it condemns society, lies along the main route of the historical process and is defined by its general laws.

What is this main route, the socio-economic future of society that flows logically from the irreversible, decisive changes generated by society’s contemporary, highly developed, industrial structures? In other words, where is this world going, a world transformed and shaken to its foundations by the scientific-technical revolution and by the atomic weapons of total destruction of human civilization ? What is the answer that humanity needs to the dangerous, tragic experience of the history of our century, to the complete and obvious bankruptcy of both the capitalist and the socio-oligarchic forms of economic, social and spiritual life of society ? What is the objectively conditioned alternative to the potential catastrophe of civilization that is approaching, to the destruction of life itself on this Earth? Where lies the hope, the great historical chance for the survival and for the progressive development of humanity?

Contemporary, highly industrialized, increasingly concentrated and centralized production oriented to the mass consumption of millions and tens of millions of people, in not only a national, but also international framework, is irreversibly promoting the increasingly large-scale socialization of production. The era of isolated, private, small and even medium-scale production is gone forever: it is economically unviable. Only large-scale and extra-large-scale socialized production, working for national and world markets, is economically rational, adequate to contemporary, powerful, hyper-productive complexes and capable of yielding optimal economic results. It is enough to think of energy systems with the combined power of a hundred or more millions of kilowatts, of metallurgical combines that produce 10-15 million tonnes of steel, of auto giants whose assembly lines daily produce 5,000-10,000 vehicles, pipelines that pump tens of millions of tonnes of oil thousands of kilometers, textiles giants that produce tens of millions of meters of cloth annually year, etc., etc.

The very laws of the economics of contemporary industrial production dictate its all-round socialization. The socialization of production, large and giant-scale, national and international, is the irreversible process of contemporary economic development that sweeps aside all obstacles on its path.

But this socialization of production, its expanding and deepening character, objectively requires adequate forms of property relations of the means of production, i.e. the direct combination of the material factors of production and the producers.

That is a necessary, though far from sufficient, condition for the creation of a national association of toilers that would subordinate production to their interests.

The historical experience of socio-oligarchism revealed and demonstrated that socialized property is only a formal economic condition for the creation of a national association of producers. It does not become an effective condition unless economic socialization is combined with genuine political democracy, ensuring that the economic basis functions to satisfy the reconciled interests of all social strata and groups of the associated producers. Such democracy excludes the possibility that the basis would serve to satisfy the hypertrophied interests of the social stratum that carries out the function of political or other administration and to the detriment of the interests of all the other strata. In this lies the objective necessity of combining nation-wide socialization of production with the fullest, most consistent political democracy.

But it is also dictated by the most fundamental needs of contemporary economic organization. The tremendous complexity of the industrial-productive and economic structure of society and the scientific-technical level created by the scientific revolution entail the radical transformation of the productive functions of the contemporary worker in the social-labour process: growing numbers of toilers in all spheres of social labour are shifting increasingly from basic activities of execution to creative intellectual functions as managers, designers, controllers, organizers of all aspects of the material and intellectual creative processes. The radical, fundamental change in form and content of people’s labour activity, the shift to creative intellectual activity as the dominant form – all this is inextricably linked to the imperative, objective need for democracy. Without democracy, in conditions of oligarchic usurpation and suppression of democratic freedoms, the exercise of intellectual-creative functions that are no longer the privilege of the few but the defining labour activity of all is impossible.

As long as the intellectual functions of labour remain the privilege of the few, when they are carried out in a framework of relative freedom only for those few, that freedom is based on the unfreedom of the overwhelming mass of toilers. When creative intellectual functions become mass functions (which should happen in the next 30-40 years under the impact of the requirements of the scientific technical revolution), then the nature of work itself enters into irreconcilable contradiction with any totalitarian regime – political democracy becomes an economic necessity.

The political democracy that contemporary state-monopolistic capitalism more or less tolerates is far from the all-round, authentic labour democracy in all spheres of social activity that flows from the needs of current labour relations. Labour relations in capitalist production, by the very nature of that process, are under the heel of despotic capitalist management. There can be no room for democratic economic relations. As for socio-oligarchism – it is incompatible even with very limited (from the viewpoint of the objective needs of the labour process) political democracy.

Thus the second objective necessity that flows from the development of contemporary industrial society – be it of the state-monopolistic or socio-oligarchic type – is the necessity of universal democracy in work relations, democracy of productive relations as a whole. Consequently, only nationwide socialization of the means of production with genuine nationwide democracy for all, accompanied by consistent political democracy that extends to, and is completed by, this complete democratization of productive relations, transforms social property of the means of production from a formal prerequisite into the real foundation for the nationwide free association of toilers; only on that condition can be realized the direct social, nationwide appropriation-disposition and appropriation-use of the means of production of that same association in its own interests. That is another important lesson of the contemporary socio-economic and political development of contemporary socio-oligarchic and state-monopolistic societies.

The third fundamental necessity that flows from the entire course of contemporary change in industrial society (in its different socio-economic forms) is that of the economic freedom of the producer and of producers’ collectives. Contemporary concentrated and centralized production (within nation-states and even on an inter-state level) would be in irreconcilable contradiction with the very essence of the intellectual-creative function of toilers, as with the fundamental requirements of political democracy. Individuals and collectives deprived of economic autonomy would be mere automated executors of commands emanating from a super-centralized economic mechanism.

The dialectic of contemporary industrial and social structure is such that centralization of the common strategic plan, its functioning and development, can be based only on the complete, all-round consistent decentralization of the economic self-management of each production collective, combined with the complete real freedom of individual initiative in the common process of social labour. This is the democratic character of productive relations of directly social labour, based on the economic freedom of the individual.

Finally, the fourth fundamental objective condition of development, one that irreversibly grows with the development of contemporary productive forces, along with the socialization of production and the transformation of the nature of labour in terms of creativity, is the socio-cultural, spiritual freedom of the entire society, of all of its members, the free and complete, unfettered spiritual development and creativity, the free realization of the fruits of this creativity. Without the spiritual freedom of the individual and of society there cannot be economic freedom or political democracy. The development of the creative labour activity of humanity, together with the deepening of its mastery over nature, the vast growth of its productive forces – all this increasingly transfers labour functions from the sphere of direct material production to the sphere of intellectual production – science, education, health, art, literature, etc.

The very essence of activity in this sphere requires complete freedom of creation, and, consequently, unlimited democratism and autonomy of all conditions of expression of the creative genius of man.

The spiritual freedom of the individual and of society, spiritual freedom together with political freedom and democratism of economic relations – such is the unique, inevitable demand made by the contemporary transformation of society, such is the unique lesson of the twentieth century.

These are the objective tendencies of development that arise out of the very material conditions of functioning of modern industrial society; they are the fundamental lessons of the history of the twentieth century. These tendencies, these lessons, determine the objectively conditioned alternative, both to state-monopoly capitalism and to socio-oligarchism. The alternative is a society based on the indissoluble unity of four socio-economic fundamentals :

1. directly social, national property of the means of production constituted on the foundation of the unity of social appropriation and disposition of these means of production, when social production is conducted as directly social, at public expense and in the interests of the association of toilers, of each separate collective and individual that form this association;

2. genuine, complete and consistent democracy that guarantees: a) election through competitive national elections of people’s deputies to form the supreme legislative, executive and judicial institutions; b) free political self-organization of the people in political parties, unions, national and regional associations that pursue specific aims, etc.; c) full juridical and practical realization of the democratic freedom to elect and be elected to representative organs of government at all levels, freedoms of speech, conviction, press, information communication, assembly, strike, freedom to choose one’s place of residence, of citizenship, of movement within the country, of exit and return;

3. economic freedom of the individual and of productive collectives formed by workers at every link of social labour and that realizes itself in: a. economic self-management, autonomous within the framework of national plans; b. free labour - free choice of place of work and full participation in autonomous self-management; c. remuneration for labour that guarantees the complete well-being of the worker and all-round development of the individual; d. defence of all economic rights of labour by organizations of workers themselves; e. social provision in the course of one’s work life and after;

4. cultural-intellectual freedom of the individual and of all associations of citizens realized through a. universal secondary and specialized education and free access, as the individual requires, to higher education, with material support in its attainment; b. creative freedom in science, art and literature; c. freedom to exchange ideas and information within the state and across borders; d. provision by society of material resources for intellectual-spiritual creation.

Such are the foundations of the society that is objectively called upon to replace capitalism and socio-oligarchism. It is socialist society, real, genuine socialism, scientifically predicted and analyzed in the works of the Marxist sociological school (by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bebel, Lafargue and others).

Of course, the experience of socio-oligarchic society, which presents itself as socialist but is in fact a false socialism, the enemy of genuine socialism, has given rise in the international social consciousness to the incorrect identification of socialism with socio-oligarchism and with its variants in developing countries. As a result, the concept of socialism has been filled with content that is foreign to it, that has been understood negatively by the masses and has been historically compromised. But the historical experience of falsification of socialism by the regime of socio-oligarchism (and in the first half of the century also by the fascist regimes and their so-called national-socialism), which could not but give rise to aberrations in social consciousness concerning the genuine meaning and content of the concept of socialism, is hardly a reason for refusing the strictly scientific designation, developed by science and sanctified by the practice of revolutionary struggle of generations, of the conception of the socio-economic and socio-cultural formation that succeeds capitalism (and which will inevitably sweep away socio-oligarchism).

Socialism, genuine socialism, as defined above by the combination of its main foundations, is the inevitable and proximate future of the socio-economic, political and cultural-spiritual life of society. (By presenting the genuine character of socialism we wanted to distinguish it from the socio-oligarchic and all sorts of fascist-nationalist falsifications that used the label of socialism, while being profoundly hostile to it.)

Humanity’s suffering over the course of the twentieth century would seem enough for it finally to merit socialism. Two world wars, paid by the people with over a hundred million lives; a revolution in Russia that heralded socialism but, due to historical circumstances, yielded socio-oligarchism with its bloody martyrology of tens of millions of victims of Stalinist tyranny, total suppression of the democratic foundation of modern social life, spiritual homogenization, degradation, followed by decay of the economy and all other social relations; the Chinese peasant national-liberation, anti-feudal revolution with its peasant-Asiatic version of socio-oligarchism and tens of millions of human casualties; the breakup of the colonial empires and the creation on their ruin of states that have embarked on the search for national renaissance at the cost of bloody interethnic wars and the death of millions; the crises that have shaken the foundations of the developed capitalist countries: the apocalyptic depression of 1929-33, the subsequent general economic, resource, energetic, currency crises and shocks, the urban crisis, the crisis of criminality, racial crisis, environmental crisis, and so forth; the unprecedented squandering of material wealth and human labour, the ulcers of mass unemployment, the orgies of dissipation of the capitalist élite and the wretched existence of the lower depths of capitalist society, social pariahs of a society enslaved to profit; the spiritual degradation of broad masses, to whom has fallen the manipulated culture of well-fed philistines, with its cult of materialism, sex, narcotics, physical degradation and decay; chronic hunger of two thirds of humanity that cannot yet pull itself out of economic backwardness as a consequence of capitalist colonialism, patriarchal rule and ignorance and that periodically loses millions of people from hunger and epidemics; the paroxysm of capitalist contradictions that gave rise to the dictatorship of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, with their millions of victims, debauchery of vandalism and undermining of the very foundations of social life in society, plunging society into a medieval atmosphere of frenzied violence; the formation of two superpowers - state monopolistic USA and socio-oligarchic USSR, with their most perilous atomic confrontation, that makes the fate of human civilization hang upon a tragic incident – the explosion of this confrontation with mutual atomic strikes that can destroy all life and transform the planet into a dead cosmic body.

This is the gloomy experience of humanity of our time, the terrifying threat that stands before the entire world of humanity that, so it seems, has risen to unusually majestic heights of scientific knowledge, progress in production, technological know-how, that in one century has made more progress in these fields than during the whole preceding human existence.

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In the general flow of the world’s historical progress of the twentieth century, the socialist alternative to socio-oligarchism presents itself clearly as the irrefutable logical alternative. All classes and social groups, outside the oligarchy and its oligarchic structures, are being pushed with objective necessity, and will continue to be pushed, by the very contradictions of socio-oligarchism, by the necessity of their radical resolution, onto a path of struggle to undermine and overthrow that system.

The working class, formed as a result of socio-oligarchic industrialisation and eventually transformed from the semi-patriarchal peasantry of yesterday into a hereditary proletariat, is moving step by step from being a “class in itself” to becoming a “class for itself,” slowly gaining consciousness of itself as a class and of its objectively socialist interests. Its class positions are crystallizing as positions of antagonism to the socio-oligarchy and socio-oligarchic structures that exploit it economically, oppress it politically, and stifle it spiritually. The historical fatigue of this class, due to its innumerable sacrifices in the revolution, the civil war, the Patriotic War, the camps, jails and exiles of the Stalinist terror machine, is gradually, with the passage of generations, becoming a thing of the past. This class is gathering a new potential for social activeness. Its social and political inertness is being eroded, as its relatively secure, contemporary material situation becomes an established norm.

In the meantime, life inexorably moves forward, mercilessly plunging the working person into the circle of socio-oligarchic contradictions: the growing material needs of workers ever more rapidly outpace the means of their satisfaction provided by the socio-oligarchy, and the gulf widens between the material living standards of the socio-oligarchs, and more generally of the members of the socio-oligarchic structures, and the comparatively modest living standards of workers’ families. The socio-cultural possibilities of the working population are increasingly restricted by the socio-cultural monopoly of the socio-oligarchy. (The quality of the general mass education is falling; the standard of healthcare of the population increasingly declines relative to the health services available to the socio-oligarchy; popular sports and vacation opportunities are on a qualitatively different level than those of the socio-oligarchs; the satisfaction of a whole range of spiritual needs of workers is frozen, and so forth.) Workers, as indeed all classes of society, are daily subjected to the arbitrariness of the police-bureaucratic apparatus, from which there is practically no protection in the form of reliable, stable, socially just legal norms.

The working class more and more acutely feels the consequences of the great-power, militaristic foreign policy of the socio-oligarchs, for whose sake its most essential needs are being sacrificed (the atom strike force in place of butter, meat…). The squandering of a huge part of national income – up to a quarter: such is the sacrifice made by the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia to the moloch of socio-oligarchic imperialism. But even that is not the basic problem. For the working class is objectively threatened with militarist self-destruction, a threat carried by the policy of atomic imperialism of the socio-oligarchy. This terrible threat cannot but create a most powerful incentive to resist the socio-oligarchy and overthrow it.

The peasants, organized in kolkhozes, have, in fact, long since become hired employees of the socio-oligarchic state, although dressed up as cooperating producers. They are a distinct segment of the working class, a lower strata, with living standards at barely half of those of urban workers, and which, moreover, are not guaranteed, since their income depends on the performance of their individual kolkhoz enterprise.

The intelligentsia (leaving aside the part that has been corrupted by the socio-oligarchy and integrated into its structure) is moved by the same set of objective incentives as the working class to fight against the socio-oligarchy. Moreover, it has the additional stimulus of particularly acute sensitivity to intellectual and spiritual oppression, to the choking of the creative foundations of its activity by the socio-oligarchic system. The intelligentsia by the very nature of its creative functions finds itself in irreconcilable conflict with the bureaucratic police machinery that daily stifles creative freedom. The dissident movement (despite its narrow and utopian goals at this initial stage - “constitutional freedoms” in the framework of preserved socio-oligarchism) that is expanding and, despite harsh measures of police repression, finding its way to the surface, as its protest voice reaches the country`s population and even world opinion – is one of the obvious indices of political maturation, of formation of anti-socio-oligarchic consciousness among the intelligentsia.

All the social strata of socio-oligarchic society outside of the socio-oligarchic structures, that is, the overwhelming majority of the population, is thus being pushed by the very nature and unfolding of the contradictions of socio-oligarchism onto the path of struggle for its overthrow. Slowly and with difficulty, the web of socio-oligarchic demagoguery is being torn, and the objective interests of the toilers are making their way in the form of anti-socio-oligarchic ideology and the gradual accumulation of forces for socio-political struggle.

As is usually the case with progressive socio-political movements in formation, they go through a series of stages: ideological debunking of the old socio-political and economic order; loss of once seemingly unshakeable faith in its socio-political and moral values; the stage of individual and group (especially among the youth) search for a way out of the ideological-political crisis and for paths of social renewal, the definition of goals and means of struggle for it, the elaboration of an ideology; the stage of integration of individuals and groups into a common political movement and the elaboration of a programme based on the new ideology, and the development of mass forms of ideological and socio-political struggle to achieve the movement’s programme; the stage of winning broad masses to the progressive movement and the development of an irreversible crisis of the old socio-political system; and finally the stage of radical revolutionary (either in the form of violent revolution or legal-parliamentary methods) change of the system itself, its liquidation and replacement with a new system.

Contemporary socio-oligarchic society is currently (in the 1970s) at the junction of the second and third periods – the integration of dissident individuals, circles, groups into a common movement and the search for a programme. Indeed, broad and growing circles of the intelligentsia, all other social strata, have to a large degree lost faith in the so-called “ideology of Marxism-Leninism” and have seen that it is a pseudo-Marxism, a pseudo-Leninism, a falsification of scientific Marxism in all its component parts.

Scientific dialectical-materialistic philosophy, as a contemporary world-view and methodology of scientific knowledge based on the sum of scientific achievements of the modern world, has been replaced by the dogmas of socio-oligarchic “Marxism-Leninism,” an eclectic brew of vulgar materialism, pragmatism and voluntarism, that in no way corresponds to the requirements of modern science.

Scientific Marxist political economy has been replaced with the vulgar economics of socio-oligarchic “Marxism-Leninism” that both distorts the contemporary structure of capitalist economy and propagates the myth of socialism as a system of state socialization of the means of production, without any regard to the real subject of appropriation-disposition and appropriation-use of the means of production and without regard to the existence or absence of democratic institutions of power, as if socialism were compatible with the suppression of real democracy.

The scientific Marxist conception of the democracy of socialism has been replaced with “Marxist-Leninist” socio-oligarchic dogma about a one-party regime, with myths that falsely portray the real political institutions and consecrate the substitution of democracy with institutions of the socio-oligarchic totalitarian regime of terroristic suppression of the people.

The scientific Marxist concept of socialist community, of national, immediately social collectivism that guarantees the blossoming of the individual, his and her individual freedom and free self-activity in an arena of free, authentic collectiveness, has been replaced with the socio-oligarchic “Marxist-Leninist” dogma of pseudo, socio-oligarchic collectiveness, in which the socio-oligarchic structure dominates the individual, stifles individuality, where the individual is destroyed by the “collective” (that is, by the organs of the socio-oligarchic structure) and in which the domination of selected individuals and the cult of leaders are sanctified.

The scientific Marxist conception of free ideological development, of free spiritual creativity, has been replaced by “Marxist-Leninist” dogmas of the domination of the unified state-obligatory ideology that is nothing more than a collection of pragmatic norms (philosophic, economic, political, legal, aesthetic, ethical, etc.), designed to guarantee socio-oligarchic domination in all spheres of human activity.

The scientific Marxist theory of the historical process of the inevitable downfall of capitalism and the establishment of socialism has been replaced with the dogma of “Marxism-Leninism” about the advancing Communist revolution, behind which hides the concept of the material imposition of socio-oligarchic rule on a world scale.

The scientific Marxist conception of morality, based on universal humanistic values, has been replaced by the socio-oligarchic “Marxist-Leninist” dogma of anti-humanist, pragmatic rule of a “class approach,” that rejects “abstract humanism,” by the propagation of jesuitical norms of behaviour based on the principle that “the goal justifies the means.”

All these and similar dogmas of the ideology of socio-oligarchic “Marxism-Leninism,” that the socio-oligarchy presents as a scientific Marxist world-view, have by now been devalued in the consciousness of broad strata of the population that once accepted them on blind faith. The scale of the contradictions of socio-oligarchism, its ulcers, has led and continues to lead increasingly broad masses to understand the rottenness of these values. This process has gone particularly far in the consciousness of the younger generations. But at the same time, a certain ideological, world-view vacuum has been formed. The search is on, but so far it is only a search for a positive ideology, positive socio-political values that would appear to reflect the real historical process, the demands of the modern world. The anti-socio-oligarchic movement that is reaching the point of integration, of unification, is working out its programme of struggle for a new society.

This programme (its fundamental goals and tasks, which take shape as a result of research on a scientific Marxist basis) can be defined in its fundamental principles as follows.

a. In the Economic Sphere

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One of the fundamental historical lessons of socio-oligarchism is that total stratification of the economy is the path to the substitution of real social property of the means of production -- the property of the national association of toilers -- with merely formal social property, the appropriation and disposition of which is usurped by the socio-oligarchy in its own self-interest. Combining in the hands of the state of both economic and political power not only opens the way for the development of socio-oligarchy, but it is one of the fundamental conditions for its growth and consolidation. It excludes democratism of economic relations, the democratic economic self-management by workers of the process of social labour (in production and other areas of labour activity). It cultivates totalitarian-repressive forms of an “administered economy.”

Consideration of these historical lessons and of the contemporary reality of socio-oligarchism allows us to define the following main economic forms of realization of relations of genuinely social property of the means of production belonging to the national association of toilers, and the paths of struggle for the creation and development of a real economic basis for socialism:

-- the transformation of social property of the means of production into the real property of the people, into direct social, non-state, national property. The subject of property – the people in the carrying out the functions of owners -- is not mediated by the state; it realizes these functions on its own, directly, through its direct economic, self-managed, self-organization.

-- to these ends, the creation of a national economic system, separate and independent of the political system, through the separation from top to bottom of the state apparatus of political power from the non-state economic apparatus of economic management: separation of the economy and the state;

-- the combination, within the framework of collective self-management, of collegiality and individual responsibility, with full responsibility to the self-management bodies of those in positions of individual responsibility: their election and recall by these bodies, their accountability to them at all levels of organization of social labour;

-- national planning of economic development in a framework that supports its macro-proportionality; its effectiveness and the strategic perspectives of development provided by a socialist, popular, parliament of economic self-management, combined with the broadest, consistent autonomy of economic activity at all levels of economic self-management, on the basis of the full use of commodity-money relations and non-antagonistic economic competition;

-- the development of small and medium-scale industry and small and medium-scale enterprise in other spheres of material production as well as in the service sector, together with nationalized and cooperative enterprises, as well as enterprises based on individual labour (not using hired labour), thus bringing additional resources into economic circulation and preventing a monopoly of any single form of economic activity, and so stimulating economic competition, contributing to the improvement of all economic forms, while serving as a means of ensuring economic freedom of the individual;

-- in the area of agrarian relations, granting the peasantry, as a distinct part of the working class, the same economic and legal labour conditions as enjoyed by all workers, and consequently the guaranteed right of unhindered voluntary transition from collective farming to nationalized, self-managed enterprises, combined with the preservation and expansion of (genuinely) collective farms, to the degree collective farmers consider appropriate. Unconditional equalization of technical-productive and socio-economic conditions of labour in the agrarian sector with those of industry and other sectors;

-- economic equality in practice of all workers in production and in labour. The guarantee in practice of a genuine right to work: elimination of all discrimination in the provision of work, free access to work and free termination of labour contracts; obligatory provision of job placement by the appropriate bodies at the request of workers, corresponding to their professional and skill levels, provision of retraining with full material support during the period of job placement and retraining; a competitive-elective system of accession to leading positions in economic management in enterprises and at other levels of social labour; reconstruction of the equipment of existing industrial and non-industrial labour units and the creation of new enterprises using equipment that provides maximally healthy conditions; the transformation of labour into creatively engaging, morally and esthetically attractive activity;

-- gradual (as the economic and social preconditions are created) reduction of work time in the sphere of socially useful paid labour to 32 hours a week with a four-day work week and with one or two days of voluntary free creative intellectual labour activity in fields of choice in the areas of spiritual creativity or advanced professional training;

-- real economic equality in distribution - socially equalizing limits in the sphere of distribution; liquidation of economically and social unjustified differences in remuneration for labour and in provision of property; a living standard that guarantees the material–cultural well-being of the toiler’s family and that corresponds to a socialist standard; retention of only minimal, economically necessary and socially justified differentiation in remuneration of labour and in other forms of toilers’ income, and periodic plebiscitary decision concerning principles and limits of acceptable differentiation; allowance of differentiation in monetary remuneration only on the basis of labour; unconditional, complete liquidation of all economic and other privileges (natural or in the form of services, etc.) linked to one or another social-labour functions carried out by toilers;

-- genuine economic equality of women; economic provision for children (from preschool and up to and including higher education ages);

-- priority to the resolution of the housing problem: provision of each family with a separate apartment according to the formula: a separate room for each member of the family + a common room and the full complex of modern communal services (both in city and country); development of social infrastructure providing a maximally high living standard for the entire population (community facilities, transport, services, leisure industry, etc.)

b. In the Political Sphere

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The fundamental lesson of the history and contemporary condition of socio-oligarchism, of its origins, consolidation and rule, is that the socialist revolution creates the possibility for the establishment of socialist social relations, but if the socialist basis is somehow created but not combined with a consistently democratic socialist political superstructure, then socialism as such cannot be realized and a socio-oligarchy arises. A system of socio-oligarchism is established that in turn deforms the base itself, transforming socialist productive relations, and the main one – property relations of the means of production -- from genuinely socialist into merely formally socialist relations that are in practice exploited in the interest of the socio-oligarchy.

Consideration of this fundamental lesson allows us to define the main political forms of genuine socialism and the path of struggle for its establishment:

-- the establishment of a parliamentary, consistently democratic, socialist state structure in the form of legislative and executive powers based on free popular will expressed in competitive, equal, direct and proportional elections; establishment of parliamentary-democratic institutions guaranteed by a constitution adopted by plebiscite; formation of a government by the party-parliamentary majority responsible to the parliament and which can be removed by it; the opposition’s full rights of initiative and of criticism; separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers;

-- full freedom of political parties organized and developed by citizens on their own initiative and not requiring sanction by the state; political parliamentary competition among parties to represent popular interests in elected organs of government;

-- free democratic organizational forms of activity of non-party associations of the population, on the national, regional and local levels, occupational, problem-oriented, etc.; the complete freedom to pursue their goals;

-- free independent trade unions with the function of defending and promoting the economic, social, political, cultural and other needs and rights of their members; the unlimited right to strike, including sectorial and national general strikes;

-- national plebiscitary forms of resolution of fundamental problems of the economic, social, political and cultural-spiritual life of the people;

-- broad regional (national-autonomous) political self-management with minimal necessary centralization of the exercise of general political functions of the state: foreign policy, defence, the supreme judicial bodies, regulation of the foundations of protection of social order and of the legal foundations (criminal and civil) of the organization of judicial institutions and process (criminal and civil), general and higher education, healthcare, the living environment;

-- complete, genuine freedom of conviction, of speech, of the press, of information and communication, of assembly, of protest, of management of religious cults, freedom of choice of place of habitation, freedom to leave the country temporarily or to emigrate, freedom of former citizens to return, prohibition of any form of passport control of movement or of choice of habitation within the country. For the realization of these democratic freedoms, provision of citizen collectives, their organizations, parties and unions with the right to acquire the necessary material means for the pursuit of their goals (buildings, equipment, printing facilities, means of transport, etc.)

-- complete national equality, prohibition by law of all forms of discrimination (direct, indirect, open or hidden) on national or racial grounds; a policy of consistent internationalism;

-- the state structure of the USSR as a federative union of national socialist republics, each with the full attributes of statehood; the right of national self-determination, including secession on the basis of the plebiscitary expression of the popular will, the plebiscite to be conducted on the demand of social organizations representing not less than 25% of the electors of the given nation;

-- formation and development of an army as a socialist, democratic institution: combination of obligatory military service with voluntary staffing; development of territorial militia formations as reserves; reduction of the size of the army to the minimum needed for the security of the country; abolition formal symbols of respect for rank and of feudal-bureaucratic drilling; military discipline based on the conscious civic responsibility of citizens defending their socialist state; democratic control of the army by the broad public and press.

c. In the Area of Legal Rights

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An important lesson of history and of the contemporary reality of socio-oligarchism is that the tendencies to degeneration of originally popular regimes, of the development of totalitarian oppression of the individual and society, are nurtured by the undermining and practical destruction of the legal bases for the normal functioning of society, civic organizations, and of individuals. From that experience follow the basic legal forms of genuinely socialist society:

-- establishment of genuine, stable, law-based statehood, protected by stable laws that are equally obligatory for all of society, for authorities of all levels, for collectives and individual citizens, from the very top of state power and down to the actions of the individual citizen. A genuine rejection of any dictatorial actions not linked to the law. The law has to be above any powers of the state;

-- inviolability of the individual, his honour and dignity, property, dwelling, all his guaranteed freedoms and rights; habeus corpus; guarantee of full democratic rights of protection of the individual during the stage of preliminary judicial inquiry; presumption of innocence,; guarantee of impartiality of courts proceedings and protection from outside pressures – from the state, press, others organs of information, other citizens; transparency of preliminary and judicial examinations;

-- freedom and independence of democratically elected judicial bodies at all levels. Determination of guilt by democratically elected collegia of associate judges. Adversarial criminal and civil trials; strict observation of the accused’s rights to legal defence;

-- prohibition on the creation and activity of secret security organs; maintenance of public order and safety; the fight against crime through a system of popular militia (police) relying on broad community support and responsible to the community and the press;

-- socialistically humane legislation on criminal and civil responsibility for violations of the law that corresponds to contemporary level of social development and affirmation of individual dignity; elaboration of a system of punitive measures that combines concern with the effective defence of society from crime with concern for the rehabilitation of those who have violated the law and committed crimes;

-- social, democratic control of all organs and regimes of the penitentiary system; a humane regime of incarceration that is worthy of a socialist society; exclusion of any possibility of humiliation or undermining of the health of the incarcerated; guarantee of rights of the incarcerated, including the right to appeal to judicial organs against violations of legal norms of incarceration;

-- genuine legal defence of all democratic rights of the population; strict legal guarantees against any form of discrimination, including and above all discrimination on ethnic, racial, sexual or age grounds; effective legal defence of the democratic rights of citizens.

d. In the Areas of Education and Culture

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Another of the very grave lessons of the historical and contemporary experience of socio-oligarchism is its intimate relationship with the profound deformation, indeed degradation, of both form and content of education, science, art, literature and all other manifestations of spiritual creation - their socio-oligarchic perversion, spiritual impoverishment, the undermining of humanistic moral principles, the subordination of spiritual creativity to narrowly pragmatic, mercenary aims of the socio-oligarchic regime for the sake of its strengthening, for masking its exploitative nature, for its defence and propaganda purposes. This lesson leads to the following conclusions for the socio-cultural, spiritual forms of socialism :

-- consistent democratism in the content, form, and tasks of education at all levels through the provision of universal access to education of equal quality for all strata of the population, urban and rural, centre and periphery; modernization and raising its level to the contemporary level of scientific knowledge; its democratization and the elimination of conformism of any kind, an orientation toward fostering the creativity and independence of students; education must be thoroughly imbued with humanistic principles; education of students in the spirit of civic virtue and active, creative participation in the self-managed socialist society; consistent democratization of teaching methods and those of general child upbringing;

-- provision of universal secondary and professional education; provision of higher education for all who desire it with a view to universal higher education in the shortest, economically feasible period; children until 18 to be educated in the system of elementary and secondary education; 18 to 22-23 – in the system of higher education; expansion of the educational system to provide for the renewal and expansion of knowledge and skills of working people in the course of their entire working life;

-- support for full democratic principles; autonomy and self-management on the basis of elections in higher and secondary educational institutions; self-management functions of collectives of workers of higher and secondary schools;

-- radical transformation of the conditions of elementary and secondary school teachers to equalize their socio-academic and material status with that of teachers of higher institutions;

-- extensive development and radical democratization of science and scientific institutions; combination of research institutes and higher schools, as well as research institutes and organizations involved directly in production and in other spheres of labour. Freedom of scientific creation – the combination of minimal, national strategic research plans with autonomy of research plans of institutes and individual scientists. Democratic self-management of scientific institutes. Elimination of scientific ranks and lifetime material and social privileges linked to them. Broad academic competition. Free domestic and international exchange of scientific ideas, free contacts between scientists. Alongside national scientific institutes, the provision for communal (cooperative) research institutes, as well as for the scientific work of independent researchers;

-- freedom in art and literature. Complete autonomy for theaters, movie studios, museums, and other cultural-creative institutions. Freedom for the literary and visual arts. Non-interference of the state in the affairs of art and literature. Elimination of open and hidden censorship. The allocation of funds for the development of art and literature through democratically managed, freely-formed, creative unions. Autonomy of publishing; self-management of publishing enterprises through creative publishing councils consisting of representatives of the community, along with state cooperative printing houses. Broad contact of writers and artists with colleagues abroad; systematic and full access of the country to international art and literature;

-- full freedom of doctrine and ideological systems; free competition of ideas; free exchange of ideas within the country and abroad. Abolition of official ideological doctrine, of official artistic and literary schools, etc. Provision of equal material and social conditions for the development of all forms and directions of spiritual creation in all its manifestation in a process of free competition and mutual influence and cross-fertilization. Fostering and strengthening of a climate of free intellectual and spiritual creation for the whole people and for each individual.

1. T. Kuznetsova, N. Mozhaiska, « Nauchnoe zaveschanie Ya. A. Kronroda (k stoletiyu so dnya rozhdeniya) » Voprosy ekonomiki, 2012, no. 5, p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See, for example, J. Marczewski, Crisis in Soviet Planning, N.Y.: Praeger, 1974, p. 118. The Polish economist, W. Brus, among others, argued that there was a necessary correlation between enterprise autonomy and political democracy, that is genuine socialization. W. Brus, Socialist Ownership and Political Systems, Routeledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975, pp. 204-05.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The officially approved theoretic schools in Soviet economics were those of N.A. Tsagolov, head of the Dept. of Political Economy of the Faculty of Economics at Moscow State University, and E.E. Kuz’minkov at the party’s Academy of Social Sciences. Both denied any role to market relations under socialism. They also played an active role in the attack on Kronrod’s school. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See for example, his Planomernost’ i mekhanizm ekonomicheskikh zakonov sotsializma, Moscow: Nauka, 1988, pp. 227-228.) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Interview with Boris Vasil’evich Rakitskii, June 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ya. A, Kronrod, Ocherki sotial’no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya XX-go veka, Moscow Nauka, 1992, pp. 192-233. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)