

The Superiority of World Socialism Over World Capitalism*

By William Z. Foster

We know our readers will be especially happy to see this article by William Z. Foster; its appearance is a highlight in his battle to recover from the severe attack that laid him low over half a year ago. Foster still is very ill, but with indomitable courage he is fighting his way back into active service on behalf of Socialism.—Editor.

ONE OF THE MOST striking features accompanying the world excitement over the launching of the Soviet Sputnik in October 1957—the first American satellite was launched in February 1958—were the admissions by the spokesmen of the United States and other imperialist countries, of lagging behind the USSR in various lines of basic activity. Never before had anything like this taken place. One thing about this orgy of "self-criticism," however, was the fact that although American spokesmen confessed the inadequacy of United States work in various fields, they were careful not to impugn the capitalist system itself as being inferior to Socialism.

Here is exposed one of the most marked attitudes of the capitalist system towards the Socialist system over the years—the refusal of the United States and all imperialist countries to recognize in any way the superiority of the Socialist system, even when this is of the most outstanding and unmistakable character. The imperialist spokesmen have expended great efforts through the years to explain away the remarkable achievements of Socialism

by all kinds of excuses and shallow arguments. The reason for this is, of course, that it is psychologically impossible for the capitalist class to recognize the superiority of Socialism, for to do so would be to admit the bankruptcy of capitalism. Hence, since the foundation of Socialism by the Russian Revolution in 1917, up to the present time, one of the fundamental principles of the imperialists has been to never admit any kind of basic superiority of Socialism in practice, although now they are finding it increasingly difficult to obscure from their own followers the tremendous advances of the Socialist countries.

Of course, increasing millions of people have been able to perceive the revolutionary core and unique character of Russian history; they are beginning to realize Socialism's superiority to an extent never possible before. This is an event of major historical importance. This ideological re-evaluation of capitalism and Socialism is one of the most basic characteristics of the present period.

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SOME EXAMPLES OF SOCIALIST SUPERIORITY

Innumerable instances may be given of capitalist spokesmen obscuring the outstanding achievements of Socialism by a tissue of lies. In the past forty years of the history of the Soviet Union, the young Socialist country has made many magnificent achievements which clearly showed the superiority of Socialism. Some of these are:

1) First, was the seizure and holding of power by the Bolsheviks. This refuted every political concept of the bourgeoisie, and they did not hesitate in prophesying daily the defeat of the Russian Revolution. But it lived on, showing the special vitality of this revolution, and its unlimited power.

2) The specific victory of the Revolution in the Civil War of 1918-1920 was undoubtedly one of the outstanding political events in the history of mankind. It was one of the many "impossibilities" that have made up the history of the Russian Revolution. The war-weary, starving, non-industrialized Russians were able to beat back the combined imperialist countries of the world trying to strangle the young Socialist Republic. Here undoubtedly was an event of superlative quality. The bourgeoisie have nothing in their history to compare with this achievement, and they have taken great pains to obscure and hide the special significance of this whole episode in the history of the Russian Revolution.

3) The rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union through the Five-Year Plans and the collectivization of agriculture, also represented one of the most revolutionary developments in the

history of mankind, which far surpasses the erstwhile revolutionary achievements of the bourgeoisie. The capitalists have tried by every means to paint these achievements as failures, and to hide the amazing accomplishments of the Socialist system in these fields; thus they attempt to obscure the innate superiority of the Soviet system in industry and agriculture over the capitalist system.

4) The superiority of Socialism over capitalism was also made manifest during the economic crisis of 1929. The fact that the Socialist system was able to boom ahead, making unprecedented gains in production while the capitalist system lay prostrate all over the world, was such a dramatic demonstration of the superiority of Socialism over capitalism that even the most clever soothsayers and devoted servants of the capitalist system had great difficulty trying to defend their system in the face of the tremendous strides being made in the USSR.

5) Another of the many outstanding examples Socialism gave as it grew over the years, of its inherent superiority over capitalism, was its crushing defeat of Hitler's mighty armies. Hitler, at the height of his power, had practically all of Europe in his grasp, with most of its labor force (except England) working as slave labor behind his "invincible" war machine. It outnumbered the productive power of the USSR by at least 4 to 1, and its armed forces also heavily outnumbered the Russians. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the bourgeois experts throughout the capitalist world, including America, relying upon their own traditional standards of measurement, were in unanimous agreement that he would

defeat the Soviet Union in a matter of a few weeks. Yet, when the chips were all counted, the Hitler war machine was completely crushed, while the Soviet Union emerged victorious and stronger than ever. While, of course, Hitler's defeat was not due only to the Soviet Union, the main blows against Hitler came from the USSR. This represents a superlative achievement totally without comparison in bourgeois history.

6) Among the many achievements of the Russian Revolution without parallel in capitalist history was the rapid rebuilding of the Soviet Union after the destruction it suffered in World War II. The Hitler war machine had wiped out about half of the industry of the USSR, and killed off 12 million of its people; nevertheless, the country recovered its economic forces at a rate unmatched all over the world (and without the "aid" of American dollars) showing that the recuperative power of the Soviet Union as a Socialist country was incomparably greater than that of any capitalist country. The USSR has already surpassed the productive capacity of pre-war years several times over, and is forging far ahead.

The above list of examples of the superiority of Socialism in practice in the Soviet Union, over capitalism in the past period is only partial; many more could be cited. The revolutionary vigor and accompanying characteristics of the Soviet Union from its birth are now being duplicated by the younger Socialist countries which have come upon the scene lately. This is shown particularly by the great Chinese Revolution, which has gone through a revolutionary period of 25 years of civil war and intervention, and is now

astounding the world with the speed of its progress in industrialization and modernization. The Chinese Revolution, embracing one-fourth of the human race, is accomplishing things that are obviously far beyond the possibility of any capitalist country. The imperialist apologists are trying to obscure and minimize the significance of the great achievements of the Chinese people, but these fabrications will prove just as empty and foolish as their long-continued attempts to belittle the results of the Russian Revolution.

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By the time of the end of World War II, the tempo of revolutionary development of the Soviet Union, and later of China, was very great, and becoming more and more obvious. This period, as we have already indicated, had already produced the rapid rebuilding of the Soviet Union after the war's destruction, followed by the swift breaking of the atom bomb monopoly of the United States, and then the still swifter liquidation of the American hydrogen bomb monopoly. These startling developments badly upset the time-table of the war-planning imperialists, who didn't consider it possible for the Soviet Union to achieve these results for many years, if ever. The imperialists had always regarded the Russians as a nation of peasants, who would never be able to overcome the tremendous head-start of many years of development of science in the capitalist countries, which had the resources of the whole world to draw on. Consequently, it became extremely difficult for the imperialists to explain away these new developments, and they had to resort to all sorts of fantastic reasoning; thus, the

quick development of the atom and hydrogen bomb by the Russians was ascribed to the kidnapping of German scientists, or to the stealing of atom bomb secrets by the martyred Rosenbergs in this country.

Among the other striking achievements of the period, indicating the rapid development of the USSR and China, was the defeat of the imperialist armies during the Korean War of 1950-53, in which the Chinese smashed the most highly developed imperialist forces, although they themselves were largely without airplanes and other modern equipment. Then came the ending of the Indo-Chinese War, in 1954, where once again the armies of this backward country, repeating the successes of China in Korea, were able to defeat the most highly equipped imperialist armies of France, which were aided by the United States. Then again note the inability of the British and French imperialists to go through with their attack upon Egypt in 1956, basically because of the opposition of Socialist lands.

One of the most striking aspects of this whole period was the enormous growth of the military strength of the revolutionary forces, particularly the USSR and China. In fact, so great was this, that the imperialists were seriously checked in their avowed purpose of a "preventive" atomic war against the USSR and China.

Already the growth of the revolutionary forces was so rapid in contrast with those of imperialism, that in Socialist circles it was freely talked about as the historic period when Socialism would establish its world superiority with regard to the capitalist system in general and imperialism in particular.

This became a living question at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, in May, 1956, where the rapid advance of the Socialist powers to world superiority was clearly pointed out. It also was concretely discussed in the Chinese, American, and other Communist parties. Obviously, the question of the superiority of Socialism as against the erstwhile superiority of the capitalist system was now on the immediate order of the day.

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At this time, two general events developed which tended to obscure, at least for the moment, the rapid growth of Socialist superiority in the world; and even to create false beliefs that Socialism was suffering a regression. The first of these was the capitalist post-war industrial boom. This was especially strong in America, and influenced the post-war capitalist boom all over the world. An especially vigorous crop of prosperity illusions mushroomed, and theories developed on all sides that capitalism had finally mastered its economic crises, was entering a period of endless prosperity, and that Socialism was now no longer necessary, much less inevitable, for the imperialist countries.

The second of these features tending to obscure the growth of Socialism, was the anti-democratic practices of Stalin in his later years, as revealed by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. This factor, of Stalin's violations of Socialist democracy, particularly taken in connection with the post-war imperialist economic boom, tended to confuse many people, and even to cast discredit upon the Socialist movement, with the effect that in several countries (Poland, Hungary,

etc.) considerable dissatisfaction existed among the workers, while in Great Britain, Canada, and especially the United States, serious crisis developed in the Communist parties. Undoubtedly, Stalin's mistakes had greatly facilitated the success of the always-present plotting of the imperialists against the Socialist states, and this tended to give some semblance of workers' support to the counter-revolutionary attempts of world imperialism to overthrow the Socialist regimes of various People's Democracies. The Revisionists throughout the world Communist movement began to declare with great distortion that the Communist world movement was in a crisis similar to the crisis of the Second International at the outbreak of World War I.

These factors, however, of the post-war capitalist economic boom and the Stalin revelations, could not change, much less for long obscure, the rapid revolutionary developments that were taking place in the Soviet Union, China, and other Socialist countries. In fact, capitalism was in for the most startling shock in this respect, in the development of the Soviet earth satellite, the Sputnik, the effects of which have continued ever since to shake the foundations of world bourgeois ideology after its appearance in October 1957.

At first, the imperialist soothsayers, such as Charles Wilson, U.S. Secretary of Defense, tried to laugh off the new Russian satellite as being a gadget and a clever trick; but this obviously fell flat. The launching of a satellite into space by human endeavor, was of such stupendous importance that it broke through every attempt of the bourgeoisie to belittle and minimize

its significance, until it set the whole capitalist intellectual world atremble. Man had at last broken the bounds of space and had launched a vehicle that was no longer confined to the gravity of the earth. This marks an epoch in the life of man and of science. Space travel between the planets has now become a practical matter.

The consternation and confusion of the American imperialist world over this question lasted for several months, until early February 1958, when the U.S. Army succeeded in launching its "Explorer" satellite (later to be followed by more successful launchings). This notable achievement did much to restore the gravely damaged prestige of the United States, but it must be remembered that the Soviet Sputnik is on a much larger scale than that of the U.S. forces. It is generally recognized that in this field the American techniques are far behind those of the Soviets.

The success of the Sputnik, coming as it did on the heels of the advances in the jet plane field, as well as the ICBM field, lighted up a whole series of other outstanding and revolutionary achievements and superiorities of Socialism over imperialism, of which the bourgeoisie, with its domination of the press and other means of information, had succeeded in hiding the real significance, as usual. Among these may be mentioned the revolutionary significance of the rapid industrial rate of growth of the Socialist countries. All of a sudden, the bourgeois thinkers began to realize the revolutionary implications of the fact that for many years the Soviet Union, and now China and other Socialist countries, were increasing their industrial output at a rate from 2 to 10

times that of the imperialist world. They began to see that this is a fatal handicap in the long run for their system.

Another thing revealed by the Soviet Sputnik, as by a flash of lightning, was the superiority of the Soviet educational system. It had been noted previously by many that the Soviet Union was training more and better equipped scientists than the United States was, but this was slurred over and obscured, and belittled in the usual manner. But the advent of the Sputnik exposed the revolutionary significance of this superiority of Socialist education over capitalism, and the bourgeoisie learned with a soul-shaking shock that the Soviet Union was producing scientists at twice as great a rate as America, and generally had an educational system far superior to the American, and particularly so in the field of science. It became also suddenly obvious that in many branches of science the Russians were in the lead; and where they were not yet ahead, were rapidly catching up and about to take the lead.

Then ensued one of the most remarkable ideological breakdowns in history, with the imperialists, not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the capitalist world, standing more or less aghast at the exposure of the backwardness of their system. They were not prepared as yet, however, to recognize the superiority of Socialism over capitalism, which is the true meaning of this series of events which we have been reciting; but they did come closer to such a recognition than ever before.

These spectacular demonstrations of the superiority of Socialism over capitalism in these all-decisive spheres, put an end to the so-called crisis of world

Socialism, which the imperialists had been doing their utmost to develop, and which was the stock-in-trade of the Revisionists everywhere. Instantly, the shallowness of these charges was exposed, and the irresistible forward march of Socialism was again made clear. To make the embarrassment of imperialism all the more dramatic, it happens that this development of Sputnik was accompanied by the development of an American economic crisis, which is affecting the whole capitalist world. An important indication of this fact is the figure for American steel production, which is running at about 50 per cent of capacity (at this writing).

Unemployment in America is now over 5½ million, and growing; our industrial production is slowing down considerably; and the other capitalist countries of the world are rapidly being dragged down into the crisis. At the same time, the industrial production and the standard of living of the Soviet Union and the other Socialist countries keep rising steadily. The world is able to see in this another glaring example of the superiority of the Socialist system over capitalism.

WHAT MAKES SOCIALISM SUPERIOR?

At the present time, the imperialists of various countries, near panic-stricken at the Sputnik and associated successes of the Soviet Union, have adopted for themselves the slogan that their task now is to catch up with the Soviet Union. And the key to this "catching up with the Soviet Union" is the spending of more and more money. The impression has grown up that if they spend enough government money they are bound to catch up with the USSR.

But this is an illusion. The reason for the falling behind of the imperialist powers is not that they have not spent enough money "for defense." It is to be found basically in the inherent inferiority of the capitalist system in contrast to Socialism. Nor is the answer to their problem of "catching up with the Soviet Union" to be found in the enlargement of the National Debt, or the sharp increase of the arms program, or deficit spending, etc.

It is of course within the realm of possibility that the United States may "catch up" with the Soviet Union in one or another field where it is at present behind. This is because it has so many resources and because it has had a great head-start in many fields. But this does not alter the basic relationship between the two social systems; that is, superiority for Socialism, and inferiority for capitalism. The tendency for Socialism to outrun capitalism is bound to continue at an accelerating pace, although it may be uneven in spots. We are now in the period where the Socialist system is very definitely accomplishing Lenin's slogan of catching up with and *surpassing* the capitalist system.

Among the many reasons why Socialism is superior to capitalism and why it is impossible therefore for the capitalists to "catch up" with Socialism are the following:

1) Under Socialism, all the basic means of production and natural resources are owned collectively by all the people and are operated in the interest of the whole nation; whereas under capitalism, all the means of production and resources are owned privately by a small class of capitalists. The capitalist system is based upon the principle of production for profit,

while the Socialist system is based upon the principle of production for use. The contradiction of private ownership of the means of production, imposed on a social form of production, is the basic weakness of the capitalist system; and the elimination of this contradiction is one of the supreme sources of strength and superiority of Socialism.

2) By its nature as a privately-owned economy, production under capitalism is carried on essentially upon a planless basis, under the slogans of free competition and free enterprise; whereas under Socialism, production, because it is based on a socially-owned industry, is carried on upon a planned basis. This is no contradiction of the fact that capitalist production is dominated by monopoly and is essentially monopoly state capitalism. The planfulness of Socialism is one of the most vital points of superiority of Socialism over capitalism. This is particularly to be noted in respect to the stability and lack of economic crises in the Socialist countries. This also helps explain why Socialist production can grow at a rate several times faster than any capitalist country.

3) Fundamental to its organization on an individual basis, the capitalist structure is divided into a series of hostile, antagonistic and quarreling classes; whereas Socialism, based upon the common economic and political interests of all elements of society, and its common ownership and planned production, is essentially classless and has eliminated forever the exploitation of man by man. What classes do remain for the time being in Socialist societies at this stage of development, are essentially non-antagonistic, and the whole Socialist system is moving in the direction of a

completely classless society. This greater homogeneity of Socialist society enormously favors it in every test of strength, whether it be military, scientific, economic, organizational, or cultural; and this clearly contributes to the superiority of Socialism over capitalism.

4) Inevitably for the private ownership form of organization the capitalist system is also guilty of the grossest inequalities with respect to the distribution of the product of industry. It is inherent to capitalism that a small group owns millions and billions, whereas vast numbers of the common people own nothing and live throughout their years in poverty. It is precisely to end this gross social inequality that the gigantic Socialist movement has come into existence in the world, and is carrying on its struggle to abolish capitalism. The establishment of Socialism destroys the basis of this inequality by socializing the industries and freeing the workers from wage slavery; however, it must be remembered that full equality cannot be established until the introduction of Communism. The superiority of Socialism in thus protecting the interests of the entire people as against the capitalist system which operates only for the benefit of the exploiting classes, is manifest.

5) One of the major inferiorities of capitalism to Socialism is the gigantic wastefulness involved in its system of class distribution. American capitalism supports a system of private owners involving in the neighborhood of 15 million parasites of useless occupation or no occupation at all, with many billions to squander on themselves, and they have a large part of the whole social system involved in luxury production which is useless ex-

cept for a small percentage of the population. Socially useless production for some at the expense of useful production for the great majority is an outstanding characteristic of the capitalist system. The devotion of the product of labor to the interest of the useful working elements of society is one of the outstanding advantages Socialism has over capitalism.

6) One of the major points of superiority of Socialism over capitalism is its greater basic democracy and security for the people. Despite certain weaknesses in the achievement of democracy—in the midst of the hard, disciplined struggle carried on by the workers under difficult conditions against the constant attacks of militant imperialism—as for example, the mistakes of the “cult of the individual” period under Stalin—nevertheless, Socialist democracy in the Soviet Union has achieved the greatest level of freedom for the working classes in the history of mankind. This democracy and profound concern for security are fundamentally rooted in the common ownership of the means of production. The very heart of Socialist society is that it looks after the interests of all the individuals who make up society, and this is one of its greatest strengths; whereas capitalism focuses its attention basically on the interests of the well-to-do classes. Such limited democracy and social security as the workers have under capitalism was achieved and is maintained as a result of many long years of bitter battles. The elementary democratic superiority of Socialism is a fundamental reason for the great strength of the Socialist states; and it also explains why scores of millions of workers throughout the world are casting off their illusions in capitalism and

beginning to struggle for Socialism.

7) Another elementary superiority of Socialism over capitalism lies in the realm of the general cultural level of the Socialist peoples. This manifests itself in various directions—for example, in the fight to raise the literary level of the masses; in the fight against superstition, obscurantism, and other forms of mass ignorance cultivated by the ruling class; and many other ways. The superior culture of the masses of the people in the Socialist countries is one of the major manifestations of the fundamental superiority of Socialism over capitalism.

8) One of the outstanding characteristics of monopoly capitalism, and therewith one of its fundamental weaknesses, is its imperialist nature. The big monopolies, which dominate capitalism, undertake to rule the world and control all social life generally, in order to rob and exploit the peoples of weaker countries. The inevitable results are wars and national oppression of all kinds. One of the great strengths of the Socialist countries, on the other hand, is that they are opposed to imperialism and all its works.

The conflict between imperialistic capitalism and anti-imperialist Socialism reflects itself upon numerous fields. At the basis of the struggle against colonial oppression is the urgent drive of the people to develop their own industries. It is the inevitable position of the imperialist powers to prevent the colonial countries from building their own industries, while the Socialist countries are doing everything they can to extend fraternal and generous aid to those countries in this respect.

The monopolistic, imperialistic nature of capitalism has prevented the

lesser developed countries from making full use of steam power, electricity, and machinery generally. It is especially preventing the use of atomic power for the development of the backward countries. In fact, the imperialist powers cannot even develop fully their own productive forces, much less develop the industrial power of the weaker countries. On the other hand, the nature of the Socialist countries makes possible the full development of all the productive forces both of their own countries, and of their allies, the less developed countries. This characteristic of Socialism to further the industrial development of the backward countries, is one of the most powerful of all tendencies making for the victory of Socialism in the world, further demonstrating the superiority of Socialism over capitalism.

The anti-imperialist nature of Socialism makes possible relations of complete equality and respect between all nations; whereas monopoly capitalism, because of its imperialist nature, strives only for domination of one nation over others. The great struggle of the Negro people in America for full freedom and equality is akin to the tremendous world-wide struggle of colonial liberation, and throws a bright searchlight upon the oppressive nature of American imperialism. Significantly, in the Soviet Union about half the scientists, doctors, and teachers are women; also a high percentage of these professionals and government officials are Jews, Armenians, and members of other national minority groups; and in all the formerly backward nations of Czarist Russia which now make up the Soviet Union, there are flourishing spectacular scientific and cultural developments.

9) The historic process of the ascendancy of Socialism over capitalism reaches its apex in the fight of Socialism for world peace over the forces of imperialism making for war. World imperialism is fundamentally war-like, developing a constant urge for wars between the imperialist powers themselves, for wars of imperialist powers against the colonial peoples, and for wars of imperialist powers against the Socialist states. World Socialism, however, is fundamentally peaceful, since there are no classes in a Socialist society which stand to gain anything from war. Because of these fundamental characteristics, world Socialism has emerged as the recognized outstanding champion of the whole world struggle for peace. This reached its sharpest expression recently, when the whole world was thrilled to hear the Soviet Union announce, on March 31, 1958, that it would unilaterally stop further testing of atomic bombs. Whereas up to the present period in world history, the workers of the world and the peace forces generally were not able to prevent the imperialists from unleashing devastating world wars, the strength of the Socialist peace camp has become so great that it is now a practical possibility for the peace forces to prevent the outbreak of another world war. But, as the recent 64 Party Peace Manifesto points out, war, while not inevitable, still remains a grave danger, and must be fought against with every ounce of strength.

The fight for peace now becomes literally a life and death struggle for society. The struggle grows all the more acute and crucial because of two factors: first, because of the deepening

of the general crisis of capitalism, which forces the imperialists to resort more and more to violence in order to try to save their obsolete system in the face of growing Socialism; and second, the growth of the lethal qualities of modern weapons—the A-bomb, the H-bomb, ballistic missiles, etc.—which make it impossible for society to indulge in major wars without catastrophic consequences. The fight for peace therefore assumes the most sweeping importance, and it displays in most concrete form the superiority of Socialism over imperialism.

The most important slogan in the world of practical politics today is the fight for peace—the peaceful coexistence of all nations. In this fight, Socialism demonstrates beyond all doubt that it is fundamentally operating on a higher plane than capitalism. Bound up in its program of peace and Socialism is the whole future and progress of humanity.

The foregoing are some of the more outstanding elements of the superiority possessed by Socialist institutions. They are insuperable reasons why the imperialist countries, including the United States, will never, under their present social structure, be able to “catch up” to the Socialist world in the fields of science, education, technology and others, where Socialism is now in the lead. This lead is bound to grow in the main as Socialism develops and registers its fundamental superiority over capitalism. In order for the United States, or any capitalist country, to “catch up” with the Soviet Union, it will be necessary to make a basic change in the structure of society, namely to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism.