

proving

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Seventy years after all, though it is less than the life span of many people still alive today, is a considerable time in our age of rapid change, and rapid development.

No ~~serious consideration~~ ^{serious consideration of the triumphs and failures of} Soviet power can be made without heavy emphasis on the debilitating, ~~and~~ destructive influences ~~of~~ war - or perhaps more correctly, wars - wars which were not of Soviet making, but were ~~launched~~ upon it from both inside and ~~abroad~~ ^{abroad} for the exclusive purpose of destroying the Soviets, undoing every change Soviet power had brought about, and returning the country to ~~something of~~ ^{something of} the ancient, creaking barbarism ~~which~~ ^{which} the Soviets ~~had~~ ^{had} relict in the dust.

Soviet power ~~struggle~~ ^{struggle} against the Great War of 1914-18. The first deed of Soviet power was to call, ~~over~~ ^{over} the heads of governments, to the peoples of the world, to end the war. Yet, the first major task of ~~the~~ Soviet government was to summon ~~the~~ ^a battered, war-weary people back to arms ~~in~~ ^{to} defend ~~the~~ ^{the} revolution; to muster a people's army against ~~the~~ ^{the} hyena packs which fell upon the state from all corners of the compass, ~~with~~ ^{with} encouragement and finance ~~from~~ ^{from} the ~~bourgeois~~ ^{bourgeois} classes of all ~~the~~ ^{the} imperialist ~~countries~~.

The first test of the ~~revolution~~ ^{revolution} of the revolution and of Soviet power was its ability to ~~raise its war battered~~ ^{raise its war battered} people ~~to fight yet again~~ ^{to fight yet again} - but this time for their own country, their own land, ~~and its ability to organize, supply and lead an army and a people through years of war.~~

That first test ended in a triumph of arms, and ~~the~~ ^{Soviet morale, Soviet patriotism under} routing of the invaders. Nobody can ever vanquish a people' ~~Lenin~~ ^{said afterwards.} 'Most of those workers and peasants have come to know, feel and see that they are defending their own Soviet power.. that they are defending a cause the triumph of which will enable them and their children to enjoy all the benefits of culture, all the creations of human labour.'

When war ended in 1921, ~~with~~ ^{with} the counter-revolutionary armies broken and dispersed, ~~and~~ ^{and} the foreign ~~invaders~~ ^{invaders} driven out, the country lay in ruins - road and rail networks shattered, large tracts of agricultural land laid waste, towns and villages battered, industries crippled, ~~through~~ ^{through} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~power~~ ^{power} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~ebb,~~ ^{ebb,} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~Earth's~~ ^{Earth's} ~~people.~~ ^{people.} ~~Only in 1921, Soviet power~~ ^{Only in 1921, Soviet power} ~~started from the lowest~~ ^{started from the lowest} ~~to rebuild one sixth~~ ^{to rebuild one sixth} ~~of the Earth's surface, and one tenth~~ ^{of the Earth's surface, and one tenth} ~~of the~~ ^{of the} ~~Earth's~~ ^{Earth's} ~~people.~~ ^{people.}

Eighteen years later, ~~when the Second World~~ ^{when the Second World} ~~war was swept across Europe.~~ ^{war was swept across Europe.} From 1939, once again ~~priority~~ ^{priority} had to be given to military preparations; ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~needs~~ ^{needs} and requirements of people. ~~Once again,~~ ^{Once again,} From 1941, ~~invading~~ ^{invading} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~foreign~~ ^{foreign} ~~armies~~ ^{armies} ~~began~~ ^{began} ~~massive,~~ ^{massive,} deliberate destruction of everything Soviet power had built - ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~main~~ ^{main} ~~laying~~ ^{laying} ~~waste~~ ^{waste} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~main~~ ^{main} ~~grain-producing~~ ^{grain-producing} ~~lands,~~ ^{lands,} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~systematic~~ ^{systematic} ~~destroying~~ ^{destroying} ~~its~~ ^{its} ~~industrial~~ ^{industrial} ~~plants,~~ ^{plants,} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~smashing~~ ^{smashing} ~~its~~ ^{its} ~~communications.~~ ^{communications.} Before ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~German~~ ^{German} ~~invaders~~ ^{invaders} ~~could~~ ^{could} ~~drive~~ ^{drive} ~~them~~ ^{them} ~~out~~ ^{out} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~Soviet~~ ^{Soviet} ~~territory,~~ ^{territory,} six million citizens were dead, including a large part of the vital generation of young men

triumph in arms over

assumed

and women, ^{who} those would have ~~the people the~~ ~~the~~ the main burdens of Soviet ^{re-} construction, had they lived. Those war years of 1941 -46 ^{were} more than ^{just} ~~the~~ years of ^{wave} reversal and destruction of all the ~~that~~ that had gone before.

Yet the Soviet people emerged from the unimaginable suffering and destruction of the Second World War ^{with} ~~the~~ the energy and belief in their future to ~~the~~ the ~~then~~ ^{begin} once again, to reconstruct what had been destroyed, and ^{then} to pass on beyond to new levels in all fields of life. That once again is testimony to the strength, the flexibility and the morale of ^{the} Soviet system.

~~With~~ With full recognition of the setbacks of wars - how then does the record of Soviet socialism ~~one~~ stand? There are the triumphs.

subject

There is now a ~~the~~ Soviet Union of free republics enjoying full legal and social equality, in place of the old Empire ~~composed of a Russian master race~~ and ~~grossly exploited, nationally oppressed~~ nations. National oppression ~~and~~ inequality have been banished ^{by law}, and rights and equality ~~are~~ enshrined ~~in the law~~.

Land, mines, factories, transport services and powers supplies ^{have been made the} property of the whole people, producing goods ~~to meet needs, not to make profits~~ ^{of} elected Soviet bodies ~~in accordance with decisions~~ ^{to meet needs, not to make profits} of state / Private ownership, whose only purpose was to produce private profit through private exploitation, ~~is gone for ever.~~

The old class divisions which made some few into 'masters' and the rest into 'men', 'servants' whose ~~main~~ ^{power and} duty was to labour as commanded, has disappeared, together with the institutions of private ownership of capital on which they were based.

Legal ~~and~~ and traditional discrimination ~~against women has~~ ^{outlawed} been ~~in all fields of life and work~~ in education, training, work and access to social services and official posts. Equal opportunity is guaranteed by law.

'From the cradle to the grave', a network of social services ^{has been created}, ~~is~~ open to all, free, without regard to 'ability to pay' - nurseries, ~~the~~ nursery schools, universal education, ~~through~~ ^{higher} education, ~~is~~ guaranteed work for life, and guaranteed health care, sickness insurance, holiday pay and old-age pensions.

explorator:
security

The ~~war-battered~~ war-battered economy and industry ~~have been raised~~ from the lowest levels to ^{advanced} ~~in~~ in some cases, as in space travel ~~the most advanced~~ ^{all worlds} on levels. ~~with~~ ^{people exists on a level} standards of comfort, and prosperity for ~~the~~ ^{undreamt of} in former times.

The chauvinism and racial ~~hatreds~~ ^{hatreds} of the old empire have gone, replaced by a new socialist-inspired internationalism, ~~is~~ ^{is given freely, fraternally} displayed in an unwavering search for roads to world peace, ~~an~~ ^{is given freely, fraternally} self-sacrificing Soviet aid ~~to~~ to peoples everywhere who struggle against the odds for

~~man.~~

their own freedom. We South Africans, and our liberation struggle,

are amongst the beneficiaries of ~~that~~ ^{which provides guidance}

that Soviet material, political and diplomatic aid, for our freedom fighters & organisations.

Par. There are these and many other triumphs of Soviet power. Socialism has realised many of the dreams and hopes mankind has held for it. And yet much remains to be done. It is a beginning, not yet an end.

Par. But for many ~~years~~, socialists ~~have~~, there has been dismay that ~~the~~ Soviet socialism has not been a uniform, seamless triumphal progress, without blemishes - ^{the} perfect social system ~~for~~ of the dream, or the blueprint from a textbook of utopia. Real life has not been like that. There have been many

triumphs: ~~many~~ but there have also been pockets of failure, of error, of inadequacies and of departures from ideals. Life - neither socialist, life nor any other - is free of ^{the consequence of human weakness, of fallings, of}

^{incomplete} of indifference, ^{for} or of crimes. Nor can it be, until mankind itself has been remade anew by a new society. Until that time, the future has to be pursued with trial and error, along a path blazed out through virgin territory, by pioneers without maps or signposts.

We committed follies enough in and around the Smolny period (1917/18)

Lenin told the 9th Congress of the Communist Party. 'There is nothing to be ashamed of. How were we to know, seeing that we were undertaking something absolutely new? We tried first one way, then another. We swam with the current, because it was impossible to distinguish right from wrong; that requires time.'

Naturally ~~along with the Soviet~~ triumphs there have been failures, and disasters, some of which have left deep scars still not healed. Land reform has produced negative aspects, resulting in shortages in the town shops. Industrial reforms have produced inefficiencies of waste, unsold and unsellable goods not wanted by the market. ^{laws have been ignored, and standards departed from.}

^{the} achieving the ~~the~~ triumphs have been many, blazoned out by the bourgeois press everywhere, as though they ^{denote} the death of socialism, rather than the growing pains of its ^{still early} development. Even as ^{the battle against the blemishes & faults}

goes on, trying, as Lenin said, first one way, then another - the overall advance proceeds.

~~which will on and on, exactly as~~

The building of socialism is not a simple mechanical task which will proceed as programmed as long as fuel is added to the motor. It is a breath-taking human endeavour, to create a world in accordance with ~~human~~ ^{human} desires; ~~in~~ in the end it depends on the will, expertise, wisdom and daring of the people who undertake it.

Builders of socialism, like people ~~in~~ in every age and country, inherit not only their material world but also ~~their~~ attitudes, beliefs and impulses from their past. That inheritance they carry with them, ~~like~~ ^{as} mountain climbers carry their back-packs. Those backpacks are stocked with implements which assist ~~in~~ ^{in scaling} the heights; but they ~~also~~ ^{also} serve ~~as~~ as a dead-load on the shoulders, slowing down the ascent, threatening to pull ~~the~~ ^{the climber} back.

~~The~~ Dreamers of the socialist dream may have imagined that ~~the~~ socialism would, by some mystic process, instantaneously rid the builders of their unwanted ~~hangovers~~ ^{mental and behavioural} from an outmoded past, and ~~produce~~ ^{would produce} an instant new generation unburdened with any restraining back-pack. Experience, which has taught the socialist movement so much else, ~~teaches~~ ^{teaches} us that ~~such~~ ^{out of} a dream is indeed fantasy, ~~in~~ accord with what happens in the real world. ~~Experience~~ ^{endowed} The working-class past has ~~endowed~~ the Soviet people with ~~an~~ abundant ~~amount of~~ revolutionary confidence, determination and passion, which helps them propel the Soviet Union forward to the building of a ~~new~~ society which conforms ~~more~~ ^{also with} closely to their ideals. But it ~~has~~ ^{has left} ~~them~~ ^{them} with ~~the~~ ^{remnants of} a hampering inheritance from the past - the remains of bureaucracy and authoritarianism, the remains of racism and sexism, the ~~remains~~ ^{remains} of selfishness, carelessness, indifference.

~~These~~ ^{These} dead-loads on the shoulders of the Soviet people grow less with time. They ~~are~~ ^{are} separated from the backward past by only a few generations; ~~and~~ ^{and} many citizens, ~~leaders~~ ^{leaders} still alive today who grew up in that ~~past~~ ^{backward}. Only now, seventy years on, two wars on, is a new generation, ~~totally separated from that past~~ ^{totally separated from that past} ~~coming~~ ^{coming} to the forefront of the Soviet ~~life~~ life.

It requires time, as Lenin said, to see right from wrong when engaged in something ~~new~~ ^{new}. It requires also determination and will to change from right to wrong when what is ~~wrong~~ ^{so} is proved ~~wrong~~ ^{wrong}; it is always easier, less demanding to persist with ~~the~~ ^{past} ways ~~when~~ ^{when} the alternative is ~~in~~ ^a step ~~into~~ ^{into} an unknown, unmapped future.

Yet it is precisely ~~such~~ ^{such} a step off ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~territory~~ ^{territory} where socialism ~~is~~ ^{Pioneers a path for mankind -} which the Soviet state and people are ~~now~~ ^{now} ~~once~~ ^{once} again embarking. Once again, they break new ground towards the future, guided only by ~~their~~ ^{their} experience, by ~~the~~ ^{the} Marxist understanding, and ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~an~~ ^{an} equipment of ~~Communist~~ ^{Communist} dedication and discipline.

Now, seventy years on from that first great revolutionary leap of November 7th, - they are striking boldly forward ^{again}, under the new watch-words of glasnost'

and 'perestroika', and the leading rein of the Communist Party and the Soviets.

The people who made the great break-through to socialism for the first time are once again ~~calling for~~ on a world-shaking exercise ~~with the~~ blaze a path for all mankind, and make the passage to socialism easier, less hazardous, for all of us who will - in our own moment of history - follow. ~~The remaining negative hang-overs of the past are being swept aside; the fetters and shibboleths of one being hatched off~~

A conscious, all-out assault is under way against the negative hang-overs from the past. New ways of tackling problems of socialist development are being devised and put in place, to replace ~~them~~^{those} which were, perhaps, adequate for the early age of socialism, but which can no longer serve the socialist society of today - a society well-educated, stable, prosperous, industrialised, and standing at the frontiers of high technology.

While we outside remember and celebrate the birth of the socialist dream, they are already setting out on another great venture towards the completion of the socialist reality, its golden age.

Seventy years on'.

Hail to the Soviet pioneers of socialism'

Hail to the people and Party of the U.S.S.R.

Toussaint.

1987.

ENDS.

Footnotes:

m/s Page 2. Villein: a mediaeval term for rural serfs, bound to the land ~~with~~ and obliged to provide labour service without further pay at the direction of the landlord. Not unlike South African farm squatters.

Page 25. Lenin had shaved off his beard when forced to hide in disguise during the persecution of the revolutionaries before November.

Page 24. All quotations referring to the meeting of the Second Congress of Soviets, here and on following pages, from John Reed's 'Ten Days that Shook the World.' - the finest eye-witness accounts of the days of the revolution.

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