

From Communism to Communism (12/12)
By Nelson Peery

From time to time it is important that we pause for a discussion on orientation – just to be sure we have not been pulled into side issues and we are on track to accomplish the mission of an organization of revolutionaries for this stage of the revolutionary process. That mission is to create an organization that can participate in the transfer of state power from the capitalist class to the working class. To accomplish this mission we have to extract all the lessons of history and understand the process we are going through.

Setting up a problem requires a dialectical approach. That is, all history is a process of negation and sublation. The process we are dealing with is the motion from primitive communism based on scarcity to communism based on abundance. Like any other motion, progress comes in stages. If this is not understood, then all the strategy and tactics of the movement will fail. This process from communism to communism is of course dialectical. Each stage has its subjective and objective characteristics. The manual labor connected to agriculture was negated by industry, that is manual labor assisted by machinery. The mode of sublation was from slavery or serfdom to wage labor, which maintained unpaid labor time. Today we are seeing the negation of industry by automation. There will be no sublation since robotics puts an end to unpaid labor time.

On the other hand, if we see the negation of communism by communism, then we see all in between as stages of development, as sublation.

The world is seeing the beginnings of the second objective communist movement. We are going to have to look again at what do we mean by “communist movement,” how does it arise, and what is the difference between an objective communist movement and a subjective communist movement. Obviously the first communist movement was brought about by a lack of a division of labor. In other words, if everybody is doing the same thing you can’t exchange. If everybody is doing essentially the same thing – I don’t mean exactly, identical – you simply exchange. Money comes about only to compensate for the divisions of labor; to find some way to equate the labor of the bricklayer to the labor of the shoemaker. There has to be some way to do this. Money comes into existence, and with money comes the possibility of accumulating. Because money is just dead labor, its accumulation establishes the economic conditions for class domination. The accumulation of dead labor then slowly but surely dominates living labor. You begin to see the end of a communist period of time with the extension and deepening of divisions of labor. Of course when there was hunting and gathering society, there wasn’t enough of a division of labor in order to have any medium of exchange. If you don’t have any medium of exchange, the only way that you can exchange is by “hey man, I need an arrowhead; okay fine I have a buffalo robe.” The point I’m trying to make is that you can only begin talking in terms of doing away (this happens objectively too) with the communist system when you begin to develop a division of labor and the process where dead labor dominates living labor.

The other point I wanted to make then was that the first objective communist movement was brought about because of the lack of a broad social division of labor. And of course it was scarcity that prevented that division of labor and there was no way for them to live except in a communist manner. We see this in all of the hunting and gathering (primitive) societies.

The second objective communist movement – that is the one that we are seeing developing now – is developing because of a shrinking of the division of social labor, which make the division of abundance impossible. First you have communism because scarcity compelled it, and now we are seeing it from the standpoint of abundance, but for the same reason, for the same mechanism I should say. We are seeing the division of labor being done away with. Let’s say that I was a drill press operator. I’m no longer a drill press operator. They don’t make drill presses anymore. They have robots do that work. I remember Joe – he’s my nephew – I told him not to become a tool and die maker. ... They didn’t have colored people in

the tool and die industry back then but he wanted to become a tool and die maker, so he did. The day he got his apprenticeship and his journeyman papers, that's the day they came out with a laser beam guided by a computer that cut dies and tools much more efficiently than a human being could possibly do. So Joe has never had a decent job. Joe and I – I'm the drill press operator and he's the tool and die maker – there is no way for us to exchange. We don't have a division of labor. I don't mean a shrinking division of labor. Categories of labor are disappearing at the same time that abundance is developing. What are you going to do with this if you don't have a division of labor, you don't have money – money is worthless?

Maybe this is kind of a self-serving analysis, but I look at all of these people thinking that they are going to save and make some money, when you see all of the money that is being made today is being made by speculation (money creates money); which means to say it is not money anymore because money is dead labor. What they are creating is not dead labor. What they are creating is simply a casino. It is just obvious that money is becoming more, and more, and more worthless. If you don't believe it, go to the grocery store. I am in pretty good shape; I am a disabled veteran so I live at 10% above poverty. That is a good living. I go to the store and I have to pay \$5 for a quart of milk, \$5 for a dozen eggs. If that isn't making money worthless – how do you make money worthless? They go about it several different ways, but the way they are going about it is that the more money that comes into circulation, the higher the price, the more worthless is the money, the more labor is replaced by robotics, the more the division of labor decreases, the more the abundance heaps up on one side and the more starvation heaps up on the other. Right in the midst of all of this money. I was telling people (I was surprised they didn't know) that not just this government, but also all governments, have emergency food funds. They have enough to feed the population for maybe three weeks and there is such a huge amount of food that they just throw it away. After the end of that period of time (say the end of 3 or 4 weeks), the food begins to spoil. They take it out into the ocean, and they dump it in the ocean. This way they try to keep the prices up, because if they gave that food away – I'll tell you a story about this that made me a communist. Senator Talmadge of Georgia was running for reelection and President Roosevelt came to the conclusion, after Secretary of Agriculture Ikes had made his famous tour, and he came back and said, "the American people are starving." Roosevelt says, "we have all this food." "What we can do is have a distribution of surplus commodities." They put this bill before Congress, but these Southern senators, like Talmadge said, "Look we pay these people 15 cents an hour to work and if we give them free food, they aren't going to work for 15 cents an hour. Therefore we are not going to give them any free food." Of course the political rally for Talmadge was all white in Georgia. One of them asked, "Senator, we are hungry. Why do you vote against the Food Commodities Act?" Talmadge said, "Don't you know it is a Federal program? If the government distributes that food, the Negro is going to get that food, and the next thing you know, they will be dancing with your daughter in the street." They elected him back to Congress.

The point I want to make is that there is plenty of food. It is the surplus of food itself that makes the food so expensive that you can't buy it. Therefore, since you can't buy it they have to have more robotics in order to continue cutting the cost of production. This thing, once it gets started, goes faster and faster and faster; and broader and broader and broader. What we are seeing then is the very thing that brought about primitive communism (the nonexistence of a division of labor); we are seeing it happening again with the decline of division of labor within the process of production.

The third thing that we want to talk about is that the first movement for communism developed spontaneously along with the elementary means of production and was a subjective expression of an objective process. The tribal grouping or structure that you might have – their human relations were a subjective expression of this objective process of communist exchange. There was a certain unity within these groups that modern society simply doesn't have and can't have. The objective aspects and the subjective aspects were united.

Over the millenniums, a very, very complex division of labor -- in Western Europe, that period from about 1000 to 1718 -- was just a tremendous increase in the division of labor. With the development of iron and steel; not just in agriculture, but in all the sense of manufacturing, there was a tremendous development

of the division of labor. That meant that the objective development of the means of production and consequently, the objective social movement of the masses, disunited from the subjective movement for reestablishing communism. You always had people talking about communism. But you had the objective process towards communism united with the subjective understanding, which is what we want. As the division of labor became more intense, then it tended to more and more move away in reality from exchange according to need, and became exchange according to, money, which reflected this division of labor. Consequently then, we're seeing a disconnect develop – in different areas according to different parts of the world – between what people wanted and what people were actually doing on this question of how do they relate one to another. The one thing was objective, and the other was subjective and becoming more apart from one another.

Then came the long process of development of a subjective movement for communism, Not just Marx, but any number of do-gooders; real decent people who were trying to find some way through everything from Jesus Christ to Muhammad – up and down the line: This subjective longing for equality in the economy, but alongside of it there was a growing division of labor which made that equality more and more impossible. While the subjective movement developed, private property was developing quite independently of that and in contradiction to it. Today we see the leap to labor-less production and the consequent shrinking of the division of labor is creating a growing inability to distribute the needs of life with money, which equalizes all labor. We seen then, whether we like it or not, we are moving into crisis – a world-sweeping crisis based on the reality that the division of labor is disappearing because robots are taking over all of the trades. The social division that we are seeing today is this mass that consumes and doesn't produce on the one hand, and the owners of equipment that produces and doesn't consume. It is impossible to continue this. We have so much of everything in this world that it is almost impossible to define it. The Iraqi war costs about 1 trillion dollars. Where did that money come from? \$1 trillion, when I was a young person, was unheard of. You didn't even think in those terms. But today a trillion dollars is a million. I remember a time when there were about a thousand millionaires in America. Now there are several thousand billionaires. Something is happening with money as an expression of domination over society. I think we are going to see it resolved in the very near future. People are going to begin taking what they need. They are not just going to stand back and allow themselves to starve. Anybody who raised a kid is thinking: "I don't mind starving to death but you don't starve my kid." We are seeing a motion toward real crisis.

Let me say again that the new means of production creates a division of labor that demands communism, but this time based on abundance. First it was based on scarcity, and now it is based on abundance, or even on superabundance. The problem of it is that the human cognition; that is to say the understanding of the world, lags far behind the real changes in the real world. Because human cognition lags so far behind the real world and the changes that are constantly taking place in the real world, the subjective struggle for communism remained subjective as private property was entrenching itself. In the 1800s, when we see this tremendous transformation taking place, people really thought that they would be able to get a communist society if enough people believed in communism. They didn't at all see that the reason that communism disappeared was the development of objective forces in the productive process. Today we see this absurdity of a mass in social motion towards communism, based on the new social division of labor. That is to say, you've got all of it and can't use it; I've got none of it and need all of it. This new social division of labor is the distribution of the necessities of life without money, while the lag between illusion and reality compels these objective communists to be the most bitter, subjective anti-communists. It's because they are thinking 1800. In 1800 they were thinking 900, and in 2012 they are thinking 1800. It is obvious that this contradiction between this illusion and reality makes clear what the tasks of real revolutionaries are.

I can remember a time when you asked a communist, "Why are you a communist?" Your answer was: "Labor has to organize." That is what was on the agenda. Labor did have to organize. You look at today and ask – what labor is going to organize? What are you going to do? Negotiate how much you give back? It is no longer the same ballgame. We are seeing that the communists today have to organize themselves to

overcome this gap between illusion and reality amongst the masses of people. You may not be able to approach this directly, but in some way or another this has to be done, because all of the struggle in the world isn't going to change the social relationship. Only a political act will change the social relationship. That political act can only come about if there is a real understanding of this economic and social reality that we call the world.

To sum up -- What kind of organization do the revolutionaries need? First of all, I think that a revolutionary organization today requires a very, very high level of intellectual development and unity. I don't know how to say this so it doesn't sound stupid. I have a high school education and I had a year of college. I've written a couple of books and read like crazy because I wanted to accomplish something and that was the only way I could accomplish doing these things. Nobody can tell me that a worker, a person of normal intelligence can't become a proletarian intellectual. They can and they must. As long as they are convinced that somehow or another (I went through this and I think all of us go through it), he's President because he knows something that I don't know. That sucker doesn't know anything! You know all he knows and then some. My Dad was telling me one time about Louis the 14th or one of these tyrants and says, "do you know why he is the emperor?" "No why is he the emperor?" He said, "because those damn fools think he is the emperor." Part of our struggle to close this gap between illusion and reality is to make the working masses of this country understand that the only thing this ruling class has is an army. It doesn't have any actual dominance over you. They only have an army. I think that for the first time in human history, ever since the decline of the hunting and gathering societies, objective conditions are on our side and people are going to have to start thinking in order to eat. It is one thing when (you are talking about Pavlov's dog) you get hit and then get fed. It is quite another thing if you get hit and don't get fed. We are heading in the direction of the people are getting hit over and over and over again and not getting fed and they are beginning to open their minds up for other solutions -- other than getting the whack and then getting a little bowl of soup.

If we are going to achieve this kind of an organization, it demands a very, very high level of social and political activity because there is no way for us to contact and bring these people together unless we ourselves are very, very active along the lines that they are spontaneously moving toward. But we move objectively and intellectually in this direction. Above all, it demands an organization that is a set of independent gears that are meshed in order to achieve a common goal. We've already discussed that. I don't want to go into that. I am saying that the communist movement, like any other serious movement, isn't just a movement of people -- just a movement of some mass. It is a movement of individuals that are motivated toward accomplishing something. We need to create an organization where every member feels responsible. Up until now, the thing of the 60s and 70s has infiltrated and hurt our organization. What the Chinese talked about -- sailing the seas -- depended upon the helmsman. Well, who is going to furl the sails? You have to have more than a helmsman if you are going to sail a ship. As long as people think, "okay you give the orders and I'll follow you" -- that worked fine when the petty bourgeoisie was leading the revolution for national liberation. They did not want the mass of the people to think independently. So they had all this stuff. I love Fidel Castro. Fidel Castro said that the leader marches at the head of the column. Being a leader is a division of labor. It is not any special thing. Anytime that you have a movement that has to accomplish what we are talking about, we cannot have bourgeois leaders. Leadership is a division of labor. It is not a privilege. These are things that we are going to have to grapple with in order to achieve what we are trying to achieve under these conditions. But, first of all, the thing that we have to grasp above everything else is that what we are dealing with is no longer somebody's idea. When I joined the communist movement, communism was a good idea. After awhile I began to understand that, no, the real communist movement is a movement of absolute desperation -- a movement of necessity. It is within this necessity that we find our freedom to be real leaders, real communists, real people. If we grasp that, I think we will grasp the significance of this second round of the objective communist movement.