

The New Attack on Socialist Revolution

A critical analysis of Charles Bettelheim's *Class Struggles in the U. S. S. R.*

For over a hundred years the basic trend of world history has been the decay of capitalism (after only a few centuries of life) and the successes of socialist revolution. Karl Marx wrote Capital less than 125 years ago. In 1871 the workers of Paris gave us the first socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. In the October Revolution of 1917, the people suffering under tsarism created the first socialist state. China's liberation less than 30 years ago and its Cultural Revolution are the proud achievement of one-fifth of the world's people.

There have been setbacks along the way. The Soviet Union was a socialist country for just under 40 years. The shock of revisionism there—capitalists seizing state power and plunging the people back into exploitation—was a big one. The Communist Party of China led by Mao Tsetung made a serious analysis of modern revisionism and drew important lessons for preventing capitalist restoration. Overall, the capitalist class cannot stop the victory of socialism, so the working class should be optimistic about getting rid of capitalism and building socialism and then communism.

Charles Bettelheim's book on the first seven years of the Soviet Union, Class Struggles in the USSR, is a pessimistic, anti-Marxist account of the alleged roots of Soviet revisionism. The book distorts Marxist-Leninist theory, misrepresents the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks' work, and opposes Lenin and Stalin. In the past Bettelheim made many good contributions, but here he breaks from them.

WHAT A PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION DOES

A people's revolution accomplishes three tasks in three different areas of social life. First, it smashes the exploiters' state and replaces it with a state composed of the exploited people led by the working class. The revolutionary people break up the army, smash the police apparatus, liberate the jails and organize themselves as the armed power. A war of defense against imperialist aggression and a civil war usually follow. This is what the people under tsarism did in 1917 and in defense against imperialism through 1920. In China, the people fought from the 1920's to 1953 (the cease fire in the Korean war). The key question of a revolution is the question of state power.

Second, a people's revolution recovers the people's labor from the exploiters. The peasants get out of bondage to the landlords by abolishing rent and distributing the land to the people who work it. The workers get out of wage slavery by abolishing profit and taking over as a class the factories and other means of production. A people's revolution is a revolution of the exploited against the exploiters. "A people's revolution, one that actually swept the majority into its stream, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasantry. These two classes then constituted the 'people.'" (Lenin, The State and Revolution, Peking edition, p. 46-47)

This economic revolution is the essence of a revolution by one class against another. Classes are "groups of people some of whom are permanently in a position to appropriate the labor of others, where some people exploit others." (Lenin, The State) The relation of groups to the means of production defines them as one class or another. By changing this relation the exploited class abolishes exploitation. When the working people recover their labor, they can use it for their own needs and remake the world. Especially in the case of the peasants, the relations of ownership need to be collectivized gradually. Naturally, with the economy in their hands, the people develop production. The Soviet people certainly did this, and the Chinese people are doing it today.

Third, a people's revolution remakes all other social relations, too, and revolutionizes the world of ideas, criticizing and casting off those that serve the exploiters and creating socialist thinking and habits. Social and production relations like the division of mental and manual workers, authority organized as bureaucratic centralism instead of democratic centralism, and the private family are not class relations; class is defined by the relation of groups to society's surplus labor. But class affects everything in a society, including all other social relations and the

ways of thinking and behaving. One lesson to be drawn from the appearance of Soviet revisionism is that social relations and ideas must be revolutionized—not only because this is part of remaking the world for socialism and communism, but also because new capitalists will use the capitalist heritage in these relations and ideas to seize power and set up a new capitalist class. Those who would restore capitalism (and who are bred by the continuing influence of capitalism on a socialist society) must be deprived of a social basis for carrying out their revisionist project of peaceful counterrevolution. The Soviet Union never got into the third task of revolution in a deep way. The Chinese people first discovered how to block this avenue of capitalist restoration during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

The three tasks of replacing the state, recovering and developing the people's labor and remaking social relations and ideas come in a definite order. Nothing can be done without state power. To say that the economy can be made to serve the people without smashing the exploiters' state is reformism. History proves that a violent revolution is necessary to dislodge the exploiters. The next thing is to recover the people's labor and smash the class relation at its core. With this done, the proletariat turns to reorganizing the surplus and redirecting its use by a revolution of ownership relations and certain other relations of production and by development of the productive forces. The last task to be opened up is remaking social relations and ideas in cultural revolution.

The state, the economy and the social superstructure all need to be consolidated and developed. Counterrevolutionary forces will exploit weaknesses in any area to work for restoring capitalism. It would be wrong to think that the main way to combat capitalist tendencies under socialism is always to criticize social ideas. For example, the slogans may be perfect in the abstract, and in a factory, incomes may be narrowing for awhile, but if the factory leadership sets the plant against the rest of the economy and engages in illicit trading outside the plan, then the working class has lost some control over the surplus labor of that factory. To rectify the situation, it is necessary to understand the second task of revolution, the recovery and control of labor by the working class itself. The revolutionary people always guard their state power. They consolidate and develop working-class control over the economy, over their surplus labor. They reconstruct relations between managers and the managed and between technicians and direct producers, and they criticize ideas, habits and culture. These are all parts of continuing the revolution. The main priority shifts among them from time to time. Revolution is an all-round job, not only cultural revolution.

BETTELHEIM FORGETS ABOUT SMASHING EXPLOITATION AND LIBERATING PRODUCTION

For thousands of years, the working people have been exploited. They have had to labor for the exploiters, who seize the fruits of their labor. In a people's revolution, the exploited take back their labor and apply their efforts for their own needs not those of a narrow minority. But Bettelheim forgets about abolishing exploitation and developing the people's production. Furthermore, the analysis of revisionism he offers is non-Marxist, because of his failure to understand all the tasks and achievements of a people's revolution.

The class relation is the relation of exploitation, in which one class appropriates another class's labor because of the relation to the means of production. For example, the capitalists do not work yet receive surplus-value because they own the factories and offices and exploit the working class in them. This is one production relation, the class relation. There are additional relations among people engaged in production. The allocation of mental and manual work is one relation; the separation of administrative and supervisory tasks from direct production work is another. These other production relations are affected by the old class relation and do not change automatically when the class relation is changed. But the most important production relation is class. At the least, it deserves a separate name and special attention. But Bettelheim covers it up under the term, "production relations," by which he mainly refers to all production relations except the class relation. This is his trick for skipping over the task of recovering and developing the working people's labor. For example, here is how Bettelheim describes the situation after the Russian people had replaced the tsarist state with their rule and taken over the economy:

"If the bourgeoisie and the proletariat continue their struggle under new conditions, this is precisely because the bourgeois social relations which underlie the existence and practices of these classes have not been 'abolished' but only transformed. Although the social reproduction process is no longer dominated by the bourgeoisie, the capitalist character of this process is at first only partially modified by the dictatorship of the proletariat: the basic structure of this process has not yet really been broken. In each unit of production the producers continue to be involved in the same type of division of labor, which implies the separation of mental from manual work and that of administrative tasks from performance tasks."

"Thus, when it establishes its rule and nationalizes some factories, the proletariat acquires the possibility—but only the possibility—of revolutionizing the real process of production and of causing new production relations to appear, with a

new social division of labor and new productive forces....Insofar as this task is in course of being accomplished, the former relations are partly transformed, the socialist transition is under way, and it is possible to speak of a 'socialist society.'" (Bettelheim, pp. 136, 137-138)

Here it is shortly after October 1917. The peasants have the land. They do not have to work for the landlords any longer. They do not have to pay rent. The capitalists have lost many factories (not all were nationalized right away), the working class has these means of production at its disposal, and profit is no longer king. The vast sums of rent and profit once collected by the landlords and capitalists are now available for the workers and peasants themselves to use, if they can reorganize production. The class barrier to bread, clothing and shelter has been smashed. The way to rebuild Russia is open.

And what is Charles Bettelheim doing? He is playing down the revolution, forgetting about production, and denying the magnitude of the fundamental break that closed the chapter on capitalism and landlordism and opened the chapter of socialism. Hardly ever does Bettelheim refer to the class relation itself, the relation to surplus labor as determined by the relation to the means of production. Instead, as the passage illustrates, Bettelheim talks about "production relations" referring to the division of mental and manual labor and so forth. He asserts that "the basic structure of the social reproduction process has not yet really been broken." The class relation is not basic for Bettelheim. "New production relations" will appear only when there is "a new social division of labor." Until then, there is only a "socialist transition," and it is only partially "possible to speak of a 'socialist society'" in quotation marks. According to Bettelheim, socialism does not really exist. He will let you say a society is socialist only to the degree that it is performing the third task of revolution. He opposes the view of Marx, who saw that socialism is marked by the scars of capitalism. According to the Marxist view, when the old state has been smashed and the dictatorship of the proletariat (however imperfect at first) rules, and when the working people have seized back their surplus labor from the capitalists and landlords, then socialism exists.

Bettelheim skips over the second of the three tasks of revolution. He recognizes the political task (only partly, as we shall see) and then believes the people must immediately go over to a cultural revolution. When Bettelheim does mention the second task of revolution, he throws it in with the first task by calling it a political or mere legal change. For example, the reference above to the proletariat as "it establishes its rule and nationalizes some factories" demonstrates this tactic. Or consider this summary:

"The first [period], covering the months between October 1917 and the spring of 1918, was that in which the revolution accomplished its main political tasks: establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, expropriation of the landlords, withdrawal of Russia from the imperialist war, and nationalization of the principal means of production, of transport and exchange."

"Revolutionary class struggle may smash the bourgeois political machinery, but as long as the fundamental economic relations (those in which the immediate producers are involved) have not been transformed, the tendency for the bourgeois machinery of state to be reconstituted is always present." (p. 449)

First a political task and then the task of transforming the division of labor—this is all Bettelheim sees. The second task of revolution he has lumped into the first "political" tasks, to be forgotten. Revolutionaries "opened the way to something more than a mere legal transfer of ownership—to an upheaval in production relations." (p. 212) To abolish exploitation is a mere legal change!

Bettelheim skips lightly over the abolition of rent and profit and the smashing of the capitalists' and landlords' property holdings. He also does not care much about using and developing the production that this momentous change makes possible for the working people. For example, here is how Bettelheim evaluates Stalin's great plan for socialist construction in the Soviet Union:

"Stalin intended to give back confidence to the Soviet working class; he provided the party with an objective other than merely trying to keep itself in power while waiting for better days; and in this way he contributed to the inception of a gigantic transformation process, which was to create the conditions needed for defense of the Soviet Union's independence and for intensification of the divisions in the imperialist camp, as a result of which the Soviet Union was able to play a decisive part in the defeat of Hitlerism. The policy of industrialization kept alight the beacon of the October Revolution, sustained the people's confidence in the victorious outcome of their struggles, and thus objectively helped ensure the success of the Chinese Revolution." (p. 40)

This is an example of selective "truth." Yes, socialist construction did all that Bettelheim mentions. But what he does not say is that it built socialism! In socialist construction, the Soviet people overcame want and obtained the fruits of toil for themselves instead of enriching a class of parasites. Bettelheim mentions one result, tooling up for the defeat of fascism, but overall, he finds that the importance of socialist construction is not the construction of socialism, but confidence building for the people and a psychological boost for the party. Ultimately, the

effort of socialist construction counts mainly as a bridge to the Chinese revolution. This is a splittist attack on both the socialist era in the Soviet Union and on China.

Socialist construction provides the material basis for continued socialist revolution. The two go together, the emphasis falling now on one aspect, now on the other. Remaking social relations should not wait for any particular level of productivity; to think that way is to adopt the theory of productive forces. It is also true that social relations and ideas cannot be remade without continual progress in strengthening socialism materially. For example, enlarging the peasants' collective outlook requires a big material development of the collective agricultural economy. Talking with the peasants forever about the justice of socialist equality will not accomplish anything by itself. It is necessary to encourage industry in the communes. This will show the peasants that increased production goes with a broad division of labor reaching beyond the confines of the village and that this production can be kept in control by the collective only by enlarging the collective economy, by working not for the village but for the commune, the county or the whole country. In industry, workers see that their product goes to another factory and that the raw materials come from other factories. This is not so evident to peasants growing grain on their land. Socialist construction must advance in order to advance socialist revolution, too.

Bettelheim rejects this unity of tasks. He says that to "destroy the old production relations and build new ones" (and we know what meaning Bettelheim gives to production relations) is "the transition from the capitalist mode of production to the communist mode: the transition to socialism meaning this transition, which alone enables bourgeois social relations, and the bourgeoisie as a class, to be eliminated." (p. 22; emphasis added) In other words, it may be nice to build up the working class's productive powers under socialism, but only attention to remaking social relations and ideas can take us to communism. This is a one-sided, incorrect approach, typical throughout Bettelheim's book, to socialist revolution and construction. At certain moments, a cultural revolution is crucial. At other times, the main task is to revolutionize further the relations of ownership and to develop the material basis of socialism. (In either case, the main task is not the only task—but it should govern the other work.) When Bettelheim says that revolutionizing the relation of mental and manual labor, the administrative relations and so forth are the sole path to communism, he is providing the theoretical basis for wrecking socialism, whether he realizes it or not.

"Carrying through the task of the socialist transformation of production relations requires, furthermore, that the living conditions of the masses be such as to enable

them really to devote themselves to this as the priority task. This means that the working people must not be absorbed by the struggle against hunger and cold, and not be crushed by day-to-day difficulties, physical exhaustion, and sickness." (p. 444)

That concession is Bettelheim's compromise with the masses' desire to create a new material world. Take a few years after the civil war to achieve a bare, minimum prosperity. But then, if it is not already too late to avoid revisionism, you must devote all your energy to "the priority task" of criticism and debate alone, not simultaneously expanding and refashioning the surplus that once belonged to the exploiters.

Bettelheim distorts Lenin in order to maintain confusion about production relations and the tasks of socialist revolution. "The pressure," he writes, "that bourgeois ideology exerts upon Marxism...has more than once given rise to the tendency to reduce production relations to mere legal relations." (This is Bettelheim's backward way of phrasing his demand that the abolition of the basic class relation be forgotten in favor of changing the division of labor.) "This occurred in Soviet Russia during the civil war, with the illusion that the extension of nationalization and the ban on private trade (which was replaced by measures of requisition and rationing that did not involve the market) were equivalent to 'establishing' communist relations—from which came the incorrect description of this period as that of 'war communism.' As Lenin acknowledged, the illusions which arose at that time resulted in 'a more serious defeat on the economic front than any defeat inflicted on us by Kolchak, Denikin or Pilsudski' (CW, vol. 33, p. 63)." (p. 50; see also the passage on page 22 to which this note is attached.)

Bettelheim makes it sound as if Lenin agrees with him that the illusion was one of creating communist relations in the division of labor. In fact, Lenin said the illusions were that the necessary development of the productive forces was being achieved. The above quote from Lenin goes on:

"This defeat was much more serious, significant and dangerous. It was expressed in the isolation of the higher administrators of our economic policy from the lower and their failure to produce that development of the productive forces which the Program of our Party regards as vital and urgent.

"The surplus-food appropriation system in the rural districts—this direct communist approach to the problem of urban development—hindered the growth of the productive forces and proved to be the main cause of the profound economic and political crisis that we experienced in the spring of 1921." (Lenin, Collected

Works, vol. 33, pp. 63-64)

Lenin and the Bolsheviks, whether pursuing war communism or criticizing the shortcomings that appeared, were paying attention to the tasks of the day: maintaining the working class's political power and restoring production. Bettelheim is alone when he drags in an issue that is not involved at all, the establishment of communist relations in the division of labor.

In short, Bettelheim ignores both the destructive and constructive work of the revolution in changing the class relation to labor. The revolution destroys the exploiting classes' appropriation of the people's labor and returns that labor and its fruits to the people. The working people then construct an economy for themselves with their labor. They meet their needs, develop production, lighten their labor, introduce new techniques, take care of their health and recreation, build up a powerful defense against imperialism, and create the material basis for a more collective economy and for communist relations in work. This is the second of the three tasks of revolution and its development. Of all this wonderful achievement Bettelheim has practically nothing to say in a book on the Soviet Union. Instead, he buries the subject and calls one revisionist to pay attention to it, distorting Marxist theory and misquoting Lenin.

To avoid the essence of classes, the exploitative relation to labor, is a non-class approach. Yet Bettelheim, throwing around lots of class terminology, comes on as more concerned about class than thou. Thus, he denounces an outlook by saying, "This interpretation, which makes the productive forces, rather than the class struggle, the driving force of history, and which therefore contradicts the fundamental ideas of Marx and Lenin, has been adopted by modern revisionism." (p. 474) Bettelheim even sets the first half of the sentence in italics for emphasis.

How can any sensible theory assert that class struggle rather than the productive forces is the driving force of history? The driving force of history is the contradiction in the mode of production between the relations of production and the forces of production, and between the economic base and the ideas, habits and rules in the superstructure of thought. In a class society, the basic contradiction expresses itself through the contradiction between classes. "The contradiction between social production and capitalist appropriation became manifest as the antagonism between proletariat and bourgeoisie." (Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 1939, p. 297; original in italics) Bettelheim distorts Marxism when he opposes the class struggle to one half of the underlying contradiction between the relations and forces of production. Consider the time when classes did not exist, in the era of primitive tri-

bal society, and the time when classes will not exist, in the communist era. What happens to the driving force of history then? Bettelheim in effect denies that Marx discovered the driving force of all history.

To separate classes and class struggle from the basic contradiction in the mode of production is really to attack the concept of class while flinging the word around. If it is not tied to the basic contradiction, the concept of class floats about aimlessly without foundation. Bourgeois writers distort the concept of class all the time. Bettelheim has a fixation that he wants socialism to bow to, and he, too, smuggles it in by distorting the concept of class. The working class represents collective forces of production and makes revolution against narrow, capitalist ownership of the means of production. The working class builds socialism, which includes collective ownership of the means of production and collective application of the recovered surplus labor. It cannot be a very good study of revisionism that does not have these facts straight.

HOW NOT TO REVOLUTIONIZE SOCIAL RELATIONS AND IDEAS

Perhaps Bettelheim has written a one-sided yet helpful book about the third task of revolution, that of revolutionizing all social relations, institutions and ideas by the masses themselves. Such a book might have been helpful, but this book is not it. Bettelheim erroneously insists that this third task of revolution must be undertaken in a big way the morning after the revolution. According to him, only in this way can the other tasks of creating the new state and recovering the working people's labor be accomplished. And Bettelheim's approach to the task of revolutionizing social relations splits the people and undermines the dictatorship of the proletariat rather than uniting the people, narrowing the target and strengthening socialism.

Class Struggles in the USSR: First Period covers 1917 to 1923. In these years the Soviet people accomplished a series of heroic efforts. In 1917 they overthrew tsarism and the bourgeoisie. In the next three years they defended the Soviet state from 14 invading armies and the White Guards (the deposed landlords and other reactionaries seeking to get back power and privilege). Then they restored production and prepared for more socialist construction by following the New Economic Policy. At the close of the period, which coincides with Lenin's death, the Soviet people were turning to the specific paths to socialist construction, which they pursued after several years of patiently listening to and rejecting the defeatist cries of Trotsky and his allies.

Now Charles Bettelheim enters to say that all this is wrong or beside the point. The main thing was revolutionizing all the relations, institutions and ideas of social life. If this was not done in the course of doing anything else, then anything else is somehow flawed. For example, Bettelheim analyzes the Red Army:

"Although, in the conjuncture of the civil war and the fight against imperialist intervention, the revolutionary will of the soldiers and the masses was the deciding factor in the victories of the Red Army, it is nevertheless true that this army, as an instrument of state, did not possess the fundamental features of a proletarian army." (p. 280)

The masses had the correct will, but the Bolshevik Party did not organize a proletarian army, according to Bettelheim. By "proletarian," Bettelheim means characteristic of the communist era. He wants an army that has no ranks, completely voluntary discipline, a culturally aware and class-conscious rank and file who can run things without specialists either technical or political, etc. Or at least he wants an army that concentrates on moving rapidly to the communist phase:

"...the October Revolution did not succeed in building an army that was definitely proletarian in character, characterized by new ideological and political relations which could have been an instrument in the struggle for socialist transformation of social relations and against the subsequent rise of bourgeois forces."

"...this army was not and could not become an apparatus that helped revolutionize ideological relations and develop proletarian practices. On the contrary, bourgeois, and even feudal, practices were retained in it." (pp. 275, 113)

The Red Army fought and won the war of foreign intervention and the civil war. It was an instrument of the Soviet state for this purpose. Although Bettelheim admits this in passing (p. 280), the thrust of his complaint is that the Red Army did not revolutionize its structure nor revolutionize society at large. The Red Army was also not a factory for producing cotton candy, and the two observations are about as relevant to life. Certainly, it is better if an institution can serve secondary functions as well as its primary function. Certainly, a socialist society at some point must revolutionize relations throughout all spheres of life, including the army. But to raise as a serious observation that from the first years of its birth this particular Red Army must perform the third task of revolution (or condemn the Soviet Union to revisionism 40 years later) is to set this task against the other component tasks of revolution, to undermine them, and to take a utopian, anarchist and pessimistic approach to the whole matter.

It is a good guess that many readers think of the People's Liberation Army of China as a comparison. Bettelheim frequently suggests that objective conditions in Russia explain the failure to advance on the third task of revolution and therefore the emergence of Soviet revisionism. Tracing back the Red Army's origin, he asserts, "In the military sphere, the Soviet power did not at first have at its disposal an apparatus which it had developed for its own purposes before the revolution and in which the Bolshevik Party organically played a leading role." (p. 112) That is, the Bolsheviks did not spend years in the countryside surrounding the cities. Of course, the statement is not very accurate, since the Bolsheviks did organize the workers' military power in order to make the October Revolution, as Bettelheim half admits a few lines later: "...shortly before October [really, right after February] the workers of Petrograd and other cities began to organize themselves in a military way with the Bolsheviks' help, and so the Red Guard came into being." The Red Guard was the core of the Red Army that was subsequently developed.

The comparison with the Chinese Army is both irrelevant and dangerous. The revolutionary strategies in the two countries were fundamentally different. In China, protracted struggle in the countryside culminated with victory in the cities after several decades. In Russia, the strategy was preparation within capitalism for a workers' insurrection in a revolutionary situation, a supreme social crisis, followed by defense of the revolution against imperialist and reactionary war. Bettelheim suggests that one situation, the Russian, leads to revisionism while the other, the Chinese, need not. In other words, the Russian revolution should not have been made, since under the force of objective conditions the seeds of inevitable revisionism were planted. This is a variation of Trotsky's line. To see its danger, one should think about what it implies for revolution in the United States (and for Bettelheim's country, France). Should the revolutionary workers delay the revolution until they can work out a small army that reproduces the "proletarian" features of the Chinese Army? Or is revolution too fast in an industrialized society, making it impossible to avoid revisionism? These are the implications of Bettelheim's analysis of Soviet experience.

Revolution in the United States will require armed struggle. No revolution has done without it. The purpose of a Red Army, or whatever the workers' military power may be called, is to meet counterrevolutionary violence with revolutionary violence. Successful revolutionaries, while building the most democratic army they can, will not be misled by calls for an institution that represents the communist era. This is the practical significance of following or rejecting Bettelheim's demand that the third task of revolution be accomplished from the start, that the

Instruments for defending the dictatorship of the proletariat must meet utopian criteria.

Bettelheim distorts Lenin in order to put across the demand to concentrate on the third task of revolution immediately, to accomplish anything only through this channel. The problem of accounting and control of the economy arose in the first half of 1918, six months after the October Revolution. The Soviet state had to get an accounting of all equipment, food stocks and other resources. If you do not have elementary accounting and control, expropriation has socialized nothing. You must count economic resources to own them. But Bettelheim twists the word "socialization" to mean transforming the relation of mental and manual labor. With this twist, he writes:

"Lenin had, indeed, frequently pointed out that nationalizing or statizing the means of production did not mean socializing them; he had shown that progress toward socialization required systematic accounting and control of all the means of production and social domination of their use; he had shown, too, that this accounting, control and social domination could exist in reality only if they were the work of the working people themselves. Nevertheless, while formally agreeing with these theses, the Bolshevik Party tended to identify accounting and control of the means of production by the state apparatus with the carrying out of these tasks by the masses themselves, whereas it is impossible to arrive by that road at genuine socialization of the means of production." (p. 518; some italics omitted)

"The question of accounting and control of the existing means of production, moreover, cannot be dissociated from that of the social division of labor and the conditions for transforming it." (p. 519)

Lenin's main theme at the moment was accounting and control of the economy, regardless of how much of it had been nationalized, how much left in the hands of capitalists operating under state contract, and how much was still in private hands. Bettelheim buries this theme in the middle of the paragraph. He adds the task of "social domination" of the use of the means of production, which serves as a bridge to the goal of "genuine socialization" of them. Like "proletarian" before, "socialization" refers to rapid progress toward the communist era, such as transforming the social division of labor. Bettelheim is unable to concentrate on the present. In another passage on how nationalization of businesses does not bring about "effective socialization," Bettelheim gives the following quotation from Lenin as alleged support for this view:

"One may or may not be determined on the question of nationalization or confiscation, but the whole point is that even the greatest possible 'determination' in the world is not enough to pass from nationalization and confiscation to socialization....the difference between socialization and simple confiscation is that confiscation can be carried out by 'determination' alone, without the ability to calculate and distribute properly, whereas socialization cannot be brought about without this ability." (p. 144-45)

So Bettelheim turns Lenin's meaning of accounting and control, or calculation and distribution, into his pet theme of the communist socializing of the division of labor. This is a distortion of Lenin, who had a more prosaic task in mind. In the lines that Bettelheim omitted from the quotation, Lenin says that "only a blind man could fail to see that we have nationalized, confiscated, beaten down and broken down more than we have been able to keep count of." ("Left-Wing' Childishness and Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," Selected Works, vol. 7, p. 359) He goes on: "...we lack the organization of our own forces for supervision, one Bolshevik leader or controller, let us say, to supervise a hundred saboteurs who are now coming into our service." (Ibid., p. 359-60) In this passage, Lenin is asserting against the ultra-leftists that "state capitalism would be an advance on the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic." (Ibid., p. 360) Certainly, Lenin wanted to draw on the widest possible number of workers and peasants to get the stocks, the workshops and all other economic resources counted up and controlled, even when they were still privately owned. But 1) he did not make it the goal to accomplish accounting and control only according to arbitrary criteria of mass participation, and 2) he does not raise at all the question of remolding the social division of labor in an economy which was still much more petty bourgeois and capitalist than socialist. Lenin and the majority of the Bolsheviks were united in seeking to get a toehold on the economy after October. Bettelheim stands alone with his utopian and pessimistic desire to realize communism now.

Even when the subject is a first sign of communism, Bettelheim differs from Lenin and the Marxist approach to it, ending up with a despondent note. Bettelheim devotes two pages to the Communist Saturdays or "subbotniks" that appeared in 1919. Communist workers, particularly at railroad yards, donated six hours on Saturday to labor on urgent bottlenecks in transportation and production. They worked without pay for the socialist state and its defense, displaying the highest collective outlook and concern for the fate of the working class. Lenin celebrated the Communist Saturdays in an article, "A Great Beginning," pointing out that subbotniks were inconceivable under capitalism and that here was a first, small example of labor that was not only socialist but fully communist. The work-

ers' productivity on these Saturdays was over three times higher than regular labor.

Bettelheim appropriates the experience to say, "We are here a long way from the view that it is necessary to wait for a change in economic relationships to take place through pressure from the development of the productive forces." (p. 200) In general, this is correct, although Bettelheim's theory that the productive forces can be mostly disregarded should not be confused with the Marxist position that the relations and forces of production should be advanced together in socialist revolution and construction. In fact, Lenin said, "This new discipline does not drop from the skies, nor is it born from pious wishes; it grows out of the material conditions of large-scale capitalist production, and out of them alone." ("A Great Beginning," Selected Works, 1967, vol. 3, p. 213) Furthermore, Lenin did not stake the success of communism on preserving subbotniks: "We cannot vouch that precisely the 'communist subbotniks' will play a particularly important role. But that is not the point. The point is to foster each and every shoot of the new; and life itself will select the most viable." (ibid., p. 218)

Bettelheim, however, proceeds to observe that the subbotniks gradually faded away or were turned into travesties of their original character. He then gives us the profound, theoretical, objective causes of this history: it was "because of the very limited character of the transformation effected in overall social relations" (p. 201)—that is, you cannot do anything until you have done everything; "the capitalist division of labor had not been shaken" (p. 201); "the system of bourgeois ideological relations was also only very partially shaken" (p. 202); and socialist relations cannot develop when "the stage of the democratic revolution [in the countryside] had not been surpassed" (p. 203)—whereas Lenin at the end of his article celebrated the close connection between the Party, the advanced workers, the mass of the workers and the mass of the peasants. Bettelheim ends:

"There were therefore objective reasons for the narrow limits within which at that time a few fragile 'islets' of Communist work could develop. The expansion and even the consolidation of these 'islets' would have required a broad transformation of social relations as a whole, in both town and country—and at the opening of the New Economic Policy period no such transformation was on the agenda." (p. 202)

Bettelheim has isolated himself from the march of history, from the real contradictions of the moment, and he trails off into dependency while Lenin and the Bolsheviks, hailing an example of the communist attitude, utilized it to solve the real problems that faced the revolution.

Bettelheim's brand of pessimism attracts the utopian, anarcho-syndicalist and outright anarchist outlooks. They see the revolutionizing of production and social relations other than class not as a revolutionary task but as the goal itself. Frequently, their conception of ideal social relations is individualist, not truly collectivist. The problem with utopianism and anarchism is that there has never been a utopian or anarchist society and never will be. The choice we face is either capitalism or socialism, and mistaken views objectively serve capitalism.

During the period of socialist society, the social relations other than class exist. This means that there is a division of labor, with different persons specializing all or most of their working lives in particular kinds of work. One large body of persons are not direct producers but instead are cadre, managers, technicians and specialists. These persons are not capitalists, but they are especially vulnerable to capitalist ideas because of their lack of manual labor combined with their mental work, their position in the ranks of authority and so forth. Since they are not capitalists, the Marxist-Leninist position is to unite with them and to work politically with them to change social relations (the third task of revolution). These persons generally have not been very concerned with politics, only their relatively interesting work. Only a very few of them are capitalist-roaders, that is, persons seeking to restore capitalism.

Bettelheim takes the opposite view of this stratum and splits the people. By their very position in society, he asserts, this group of people is "a state bourgeoisie insofar as it had at its disposal all or most of the means of production and activated them on the basis of capitalist production relations (in particular, the capitalist division of labor)." (p. 314) Bettelheim's full definition of the so-called state bourgeoisie is buried in a footnote:

"The concept of 'state bourgeoisie' (or state-bureaucratic bourgeoisie)....refers to those agents of social reproduction, other than the immediate producers, who, by virtue of the existing system of social relations and prevailing social practice, have de facto at their disposal the means of production and of their products which, formally speaking, belong to the state. The economic basis for the existence of this bourgeoisie is constituted by the forms of division and unity in the process of reproduction..." (p. 53-54; some italics omitted)

According to Bettelheim's concept, the agents of social reproduction other than the immediate producers—that is, the cadres, managers, technicians and specialists—who necessarily exist under socialism are all a state bourgeoisie. Since the principal contradiction under socialism is the one between the proletariat and the

bourgeoisie, these persons are all enemies. Bettelheim rejects the correct analysis of this stratum, which is that most of them are part of the working people and only a few are capitalist-roads (and often not the main capitalist-roads at that). Most cadres, managers, technicians and specialists want to do their job well, can be united with, will gradually accept criticism when social relations should be remolded, and do not have a class interest in the capitalist mode of production.

While Bettelheim maintains his concept of a state bourgeoisie, he uses Soviet history to cover up the erroneous definition. He notes that at first the so-called state bourgeoisie consisted of members of the old bourgeoisie (p. 166). But in a footnote, he insists that what became decisive "was the place occupied by this new class in relation to the means of production, its role in the social division of labor, the share of the wealth produced that it took, and the class practices that it developed." (p. 205) With this approach, it is impossible to have a clear view of the real enemy and to fight revisionists effectively. In the above remark, for example, he talks about a new class in relation to the means of production and its role in the social division of labor. Actually, class and the other relations of production are not the same thing. To see this, one need only think about real state capitalists, like the top executives of state capitalist corporations in Europe. The chiefs of Italy's Montedison, Britain's National Coal Board and West Germany's Volkswagen are examples of real state bourgeois. Because the capitalist state owns the means of production, they control and dispose of surplus-value. Another way to see the difference between state bourgeois and the stratum of cadres is to observe the turnover of cadres when the revisionists did take over state power in the Soviet Union in the 1950's. From the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1952 to the 22nd Congress in 1961, 70% of the members of the Central Committee were changed. From the 20th Congress in 1956 to the 23rd Congress in 1966, 60% were changed. ("All-Round Degeneration and Disintegration in the Countries and Parties Ruled by the Revisionists," Tirana, 1968, p. 26) The reason for this turnover, as the Albanians noted, was "to remove from the leading organs of leadership, from the center to the grassroots, all the sound revolutionary cadres and to replace them with persons loyal to the revisionist line." (Ibid.) If the entire stratum were already a state bourgeoisie, the Khrushchev revisionists would not have needed to dump so many of them. But social position in the division of labor does not automatically make one into a capitalist, so the Khrushchev revisionist clique had to get rid of officials loyal to the working class. Khrushchev then promoted persons from throughout Soviet society who became a new capitalist class. The fact that such persons existed is a sign that the Soviet Union was socialist but not communist. The fact that the Khrush-

chev clique seized power means that the Communists and the working class were not able to defeat revisionism. These are the facts, which must be dealt with in a serious and Marxist-Leninist manner, not Bettelheim's view that whole occupations were a bourgeoisie.

Bettelheim grants, "Actually, some of these positions were held by Communists who developed proletarian practices to the greatest possible extent, doing all they could to help the workers free themselves from bourgeois relations and find scope for their initiative." (p. 168) Suddenly, what matters is not a person's managerial occupation but the attitude he brings to the job. This is merely a cover for Bettelheim's attack on the entire stratum, which he still labels a state bourgeoisie. In reality, the vast majority are neither communists nor capitalists, but a part of the working people with certain technical skills and a lack of political development that makes them potential fertile soil for capitalist-roaders. The continuing revolution has the job of changing their ideas and transforming social relations in the direction of communism. This can be done.

Bettelheim twists Lenin's words again. He notes that workers often refused to cooperate with bourgeois managers. Pretending to give a simple historical summary, Bettelheim goes on, "These forms of workers' resistance to the policy of integrating bourgeois specialists and technicians into the state economic apparatus were never to cease; they continued including during the NEP period, in more or less acute forms." (p. 168) This sentence has a footnote to Lenin, as if he backs up Bettelheim. But if the reader has the reference books available and checks the source, he or she will find that Lenin condemns "the murder of engineers by workers" and the "suicide of V.V. Oldenborger, Chief Engineer of the Moscow Waterworks, because of the intolerable working conditions due to the incompetent and impermissible conduct of the members of the Communist group... (Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 33, p. 194) Lenin says,

"...we must at all costs achieve a situation in which specialists—as a separate social stratum, which will persist until we have reached the highest stage of development of communist society—can enjoy better conditions of life under socialism than they enjoyed under capitalism insofar as concerns their material and legal status, comradely collaboration with the workers and peasants, and in the mental plane, that is, finding satisfaction in their work, realizing that it is socially useful and independent of the sordid interests of the capitalist class." (Ibid.)

Bettelheim encourages the direct producers and Communists to harass technicians; Lenin demands that they unite with the technicians. This is a big differ -

ence! At the same time, Lenin also searched for the ways and channels to get broader and broader masses into administration. It is wrong to leave the present division of labor unchanged. It is also wrong to think the division of labor defines antagonistic classes. The great majority of cadres, managers, technicians and specialists can be united with the rest of the working people to build socialism both as a material force and as a new arrangement of everyone's work. Those who seem to place such great emphasis on the task of revolutionizing social relations actually do not understand how to accomplish it. They are objectively splitters of the people.

The main danger of revisionism does not come from a whole social stratum but rather from the dedicated capitalists who may be found in this stratum but also in other places. The "gang of four" in China were a good example of capitalist-roaders. They were not factory managers. Like Khrushchev, they were specialists in political intrigue. They aimed directly for political power in order to restore capitalism. These are the real state bourgeois, along with their recruited henchmen, thugs and fellow plotters.

AN ALL-OUT POLITICAL ATTACK ON SOCIALISM

The essence of Bettelheim's theory is that he fixes on the third task of revolution, making an absolute of it. The Marxist-Leninist approach is to revolutionize all of society by taking up contradictions one after another as they really develop. Bettelheim's approach is idealist; the Marxist-Leninist approach is materialist.

Politically, it is impossible to find a third stand on the dictatorship of the proletariat other than supporting or opposing it. The anti-Marxist theory of Class Struggles in the USSR is combined with a sustained political attack on Lenin, the Bolsheviks, the dictatorship of the proletariat and Marxism-Leninism. For the Bolsheviks' work in World War I—the outstanding example of holding to the commitment to proletarian internationalism and revolution while the Kautskyite opportunists came out openly in support of their capitalists—Bettelheim has no praise but only stories about "ideological divisions" that allegedly plagued the Bolsheviks. (p. 124) The October Revolution was, according to Bettelheim, not a watershed between two social systems but only an "armed conflict [that] had to take place in order to consolidate the relationship of forces in favor of the proletarian revolution and demonstrate in practice that real power was now in the hands of the soviets and of the Bolshevik Party." (p. 81) For it was "the new relations of forces between classes which the October insurrection revealed..." (p. 91) Bettelheim

reduces revolution and political power to a demonstration. And what did the October Revolution bring? It brought, he says, a society where the workers and peasants have "fear of repression" (p. 339). The world of difference between the exploiters' state power and the working people's own state power becomes muddy in this book.

On the morning of the October Revolution, the Soviet government led by the Bolshevik Party issued a decree on land that ended the landlords' ownership forever. Bettelheim misrepresents the history of the decree:

"The actual content of the 'decree on land,' and of the documents accompanying and following it which dealt with its practical application, did not correspond to the Bolshevik Party's previous program, but coincided almost exactly with the first draft of a decree drawn up in August 1917 by the All-Russia Peasants' Congress..." (p. 211) So far, this is true. "To those Bolsheviks who protested against their party's approval of arrangements which it had previously stigmatized as being bourgeois-democratic, not socialist—in that, instead of abolishing private exploitation of the land and favoring the development of large, socialist units of production, it favored the multiplication of small-scale units—Lenin replied that these arrangements gave expression to 'the absolute will of the vast majority of the class-conscious peasants of Russia.'" (p. 211)

Contrary to what Bettelheim suggests, the Bolshevik program never opposed giving the land to the peasants and never demanded a direct passage from landlord estates to large, socialist units of production. The change in Bolshevik policy was much smaller, having to do with a minor point of how to break up the landlords' land. As Lenin says when combating Kautsky's distortions on the same topic:

"...it is necessary, first of all, to establish the following two fundamental facts: (a) in reviewing the experience of 1905 (I may refer, for instance, to my work on the agrarian problem in the first Russian revolution [such as "The Agrarian Program of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-07," Selected Works, vol. 3]), the Bolsheviks pointed to the democratically progressive, the democratically revolutionary meaning of the slogan 'equal land tenure,' and in 1917, before the October Revolution, they spoke of this quite definitely; (b) when enforcing the Land Socialization Act—the 'spirit' of which is equal land tenure—the Bolsheviks most explicitly and definitely declared: this is not our idea, we do not agree with this slogan, but we think it is our duty to enforce it because this is the demand of the overwhelming majority of the peasants." (Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Peking edition, p. 109)

"The victorious Bolshevik revolution meant the end of vacillation, it meant the complete destruction of the monarchy and of landlordism (which had not been destroyed before the October Revolution). We carried the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion." (Ibid., pp. 99-100)

The Bolshevik program was always to destroy landlordism in a democratic revolution with the peasants, then later to show the poor and middle peasants the advantages of collective farming. Bettelheim is wrong to say, or to leave the uncorrected impression, that the Bolsheviks favored the development of large, socialist units "instead of" the private use of the land. His history is unreliable.

But Bettelheim will not give up misrepresenting events. On another subject he writes about "the elections to the Constituent Assembly, which was dissolved almost as soon as it met, on the night of January 5-6, 1918. These elections, organized under Soviet rule, gave only 175 seats of a total of 707 to the Bolsheviks, as against 410 to the SRs [Socialist-Revolutionaries], 17 to the Cadets," etc. (p. 103)

The elections to the Constituent Assembly were not organized under Soviet rule. As Lenin noted, "The convocation of the Constituent Assembly in our revolution on the basis of lists submitted in the middle of October 1917 is taking place under conditions which preclude the possibility of the elections to this Constituent Assembly faithfully expressing the will of the people in general and of the toiling masses in particular." (Lenin, op. cit., p. 124)

The parties' lists of candidates came out in the middle of October, before the Revolution. Furthermore, the Socialist-Revolutionary Party "...came out with united lists at the elections to the Constituent Assembly in the middle of October 1917, but split after the elections and before the assembly met." (Ibid.) The large number of SR delegates quoted by Bettelheim is meaningless. They were mostly Right SRs who made up the lists before the October Revolution and the balloting itself. The bulk of the peasants were represented by the Left SRs. This fact could not be reflected in the Assembly. To assert in this situation that the elections were organized under Soviet rule, to quote "only" 175 Bolshevik delegates and to ignore the bogus character of the 410 SRs is a distortion of historical fact. With false evidence, Bettelheim makes a non-class appeal to the prejudices of pure democracy. The truth is that democracy is always democracy under the rule of a class, and that the Bolshevik Party, by itself or allied when possible with the Left SRs, won the overwhelming support of the working class and the working peasants.

It seems that Bettelheim cannot get the facts straight when political questions of democracy are involved. For example, he writes, "Lenin's speeches at the Tenth Congress show, too, that he recommended that...when a party congress proved unable to arrive at a satisfactory degree of unity, elections to the Central Committee be carried out 'according to platforms,' so that the main rival tendencies should secure representation thereon." (p. 400) This is false. Lenin was arguing against Ryazanov's motion that "the Congress vigorously opposes any election to the Congress by platform." (Note in Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 32, p. 550) Lenin said no, "The present Congress cannot in any way bind the elections to the next Congress." (Ibid., p. 261) Ryazanov wanted to lay down a rule at the Tenth Congress that elections to the Eleventh Congress could not be by platform. While Lenin opposed this, only Bettelheim imagines that Lenin suggested freezing differences at the Tenth Congress formally into the Central Committee by allocating so many seats on it to each view on a question that would presumably be dead by the time of the Eleventh Congress. Lenin was for democracy but not factions. Bettelheim distorts the truth to suggest a measure that would encourage factions.

According to Bettelheim, the Tenth Congress in 1921 "meant a break with the Bolshevik tradition" of broad, open discussion. (p. 395) Actually, the Party tolerated endless debates from the Trotskyites for years afterward.

Bettelheim portrays Lenin urging compulsion against the peasants: "...he urged that the 'apparatus of compulsion' be 'activated and reinforced.'" (p. 395) By checking Lenin's words we find that Bettelheim has turned them upside down: "We shall be able to achieve this only when we are able to convince more millions of people who are not yet ready for it. We must devote all our forces to this and see to it that the apparatus of compulsion, activated and reinforced, shall be adapted and developed for a new drive of persuasion." (Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 31, p. 505) Can it be honest quoting to lift out of this the phrases that the "apparatus of compulsion" be "activated and reinforced"?

Bettelheim apparently feels justified in turning around Lenin's words, because he knows that "Lenin's writings testify to the illusions" of the day (p. 353), that Lenin's analysis "suffers from the defect of suggesting (though not actually saying)" something Bettelheim knows is wrong (p. 474), that "Lenin's answer is inadequate" (p. 458), that Lenin was not free from economism (p. 409) and so on. In fact, it is Bettelheim who quotes Lenin out of context, distorts him and hides Lenin's line when it exposes Bettelheim's non-Marxist views and anti-Bolshevik history.

The documentation of Class Struggles in the USSR is very poor. It consists of

the misused phrases from Lenin plus numerous references to bourgeois and revisionist sources. In a book on Soviet history, it is astounding to find not one reference in the hundreds of footnotes to the History of the CPSU (Short Course). When an author has little reliable information to support his analysis, and uses numerous factual inaccuracies, and distorts quotations, what confidence can the reader have in the whole approach? None.

When it comes to the Twentieth Congress of 1956, Bettelheim has nothing about it being the Khrushchevite revisionists' congress, only a lament that its first, hopeful signs of being an example of "self-criticism" did not turn out to be the case. (p. 11) Bettelheim does not see the Twentieth Congress as a turning point because he sees revisionism from the very start of the Soviet era. For example, he gives us such bogus dialectics as the statement, "In our time it is therefore vital that we understand the reasons why the first victorious revolution has ultimately produced the Soviet reality of today." (p. 18) No, it is the capitalist-roaders, undermining and reversing the first socialist revolution, who produced the Soviet reality of today, the restoration of capitalism. And yes, there are lessons for communists to learn, but they extend the October Revolution, not slander it.

Bettelheim opposes the dictatorship of the proletariat instead of taking a partisan stand with the working class to help fight the bourgeoisie. Ripping Bolshevik policy out of context, he finds great fault whenever the Bolsheviks do anything to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the other hand, he is only mildly critical or actually favorable to the so-called Workers' Opposition, the anti-Bolshevik Socialist-Revolutionary rebellion and Khrushchev's Twentieth Congress. At best, he places both the Bolsheviks and the anarcho-syndicalists, counterrevolutionaries and revisionists on the same "economist" level, below Charles Bettelheim. His book is a 500-page attack on socialism. It confuses the tasks of revolution, overlooks the socialist revolution against capitalist exploitation, pits the component revolutionary tasks of taking back the working people's labor and of revolutionizing social relations against each other, distorts the role, method and timing of cultural revolution, and dumps all this bad theory into a brew of misinformation and slander on the Bolsheviks and their work.

Under the cover of helping Marxists fight revisionism, Bettelheim has produced a book that applies the wrong criteria to judge socialist revolution and therefore ends up with a heavy feeling of pessimism about building socialism. One result of this pessimism is Bettelheim's recent attack on the Communist Party of China. This is not an accurate assessment. Socialism has appeared and made tremendous advances toward replacing capitalism on the earth in a relatively quick historical

time. Successive defeats have been followed by greater victories and surer knowledge of how to proceed. This is the case with the October Revolution. It was a great victory after the Paris Commune, giving birth to the first socialist state which lasted for decades. The temporary reign of the Khrushchevite capitalists in the Soviet Union will not last, and it soon provided important negative experience from which the Communist Party of China found the way toward Cultural Revolution and the continuation of the revolution in all spheres under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The working class and its revolutionary leaders in the United States and presumably in France have a rich historical experience, summed up especially in the classic works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, to learn from and to apply to their own societies. These resources, not Class Struggles in the USSR, should be our guide.

—Charles Loren

Copyright © 1977 by Cardinal Publishers. All rights reserved.

Also available:

CLASSES IN THE UNITED STATES

Workers Against Capitalists

Charles Loren

Cardinal Publishers

P. O. Box 207

Davis, California 95616

Paperbound	\$2.60
Casebound (Smyth sewn)	\$8.45