



Speech by

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at the International  
Theoretical Conference of the  
SED Central Committee on  
“Karl Marx and Our Time :  
The Struggle for Peace and  
Social Progress”

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Comrades,  
Distinguished guests,

A hundred years ago, when Karl Marx, the great thinker and revolutionary, had closed his eyes for ever, Friedrich Engels, his friend and companion throughout a lifetime of struggle, declared that his name and work would endure through the ages. These prophetic words are proving true in our challenging and turbulent age as the human condition undergoes a radical transformation on all continents and the human race summons all its energies to banish the spectre of self-annihilation in a nuclear holocaust.

As we all know, events in honour of Karl Marx are taking place everywhere. People have been swarming to exhibitions to find out more about his work. Many publications are appearing. Films, newspapers and other media have awakened millions upon millions to the personality and achievements of the greatest son of the German people.

Karl Marx dedicated his life to the task of not only interpreting the world, but actually changing it. And the world has indeed changed beyond recognition since his day. We can see now that this regeneration of all social phenomena has occurred in the spirit of Karl Marx, along revolutionary lines, rather than in the spirit of those who pursued him with hatred throughout his life and then, after his death, sought in vain to extinguish the fire of his teachings.

Marx enabled the working class in all lands to perceive its



historical mission as the grave-digger of the old society and the architect of a new society which is free from the exploitation of man by man. By abolishing exploitation, the human race also rids itself of other scourges which have afflicted it for centuries—national oppression and racial discrimination, and devastating wars. As all of us can observe, the working class has evolved into a decisive force behind the wheel of history. After the 19th century with all its struggles, after the triumph and bloody suppression of the Paris Commune, after the revolutionary upheavals which put an end to the First World War early this century, after the Soviet Union had powered the Allied coalition to victory over German fascism, the working class emerged in many countries as the ruling class, establishing socialist society in alliance with the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

It was the Russian proletariat, led by the Bolshevik Party and by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, on whom had fallen the mantle of Marx and Engels, which blazed this trail with the Great October Socialist Revolution. In Moscow and Peking, in Berlin, Havana and Addis Ababa, in Prague, Hanoi and Aden, in Warsaw, Ulan Bator and Pyongyang, in Budapest and Vientiane, in Sofia and Kabul, in Bucharest and Luanda, in Belgrade and Maputo—everywhere we can see the contours of a world in which the people, in the words of Engels, are stepping from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.

The vast impact which the Great October Socialist Revolution has made on the development of mankind is very much apparent. The 60th anniversary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the participation of numerous communist, socialist and social democratic parties, of revolutionary-democratic parties and liberation movements in the celebrations in Moscow to mark the occasion, underline the great prestige which the Soviet Union enjoys worldwide and the great attraction it holds for the international labour movement and for all peoples.

How could it be otherwise! The Great October Socialist Revolution was no ordinary revolution. It differed radically from all

previous revolutions including the great French Revolution which continues to command our respect. All preceding revolutions, it will be recalled, had only led to an old exploitative system being replaced by a new one. The exploitation of man by man remained, but the Red October abolished it for the first time. The victory brought the workers to power in alliance with the peasants. That is the fundamental distinction between, on the one hand, the Great October Socialist Revolution and the revolutions in the other socialist countries and, on the other, all the revolutions which went before. And herein lies the significance of real socialism today in the history of the world.

Basically, the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution was a victory for the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Yuri Andropov, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, rightly pointed out recently in his article dealing with Marx's theory and some aspects of socialist construction in the USSR that Marxism in our day would be inconceivable without or alongside Leninism. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party which he founded, he writes, assumed the leading role in the first victorious revolution which completely changed the sociopolitical complexion of our planet. This ushered in a new era, one of worldwide transition from capitalism to socialism, of striking successes and historic achievements by the workers and the mass of the people. Scientific socialism, the theory propounded by Marx and Engels, was thus made a living reality by millions of working people building a new society.

The victorious Great October Socialist Revolution made it clear that capitalism, which the bourgeoisie claims is natural and permanent, can be replaced by a new socioeconomic formation. At the same time, it proved how correct Marx was to point out that capitalism would not disappear from the scene of its own free will. Only the working class and its revolutionary party can overthrow it. This, it will be remembered, was one of the principal lessons which Marx and Engels drew from the defeat of the Paris Commune.



Whichever way one looks at the events of 1917, which marked a turning-point in the history of mankind, it is a fact that the emergence of socialism as a living organism shook the capitalist world to its roots and inspired humanity with the hope of a happy future in peace and freedom. As Marx and Engels predicted, the onward march of the socialist world has been accompanied by the advance of the popular movement for liberation which dealt the death-blow to the imperialist colonial system. This has been coupled with fierce conflict in capitalist countries at various stages in their development. Even now, the ruling class in those lands can no longer exercise its power without taking into account the influence of the world socialist system and the labour movement within their own borders, which has already become the principal agent of democratic progress and democratic renewal. These countries will see socialism emerge, in whatever colours, in a way that reflects national realities and class constellations and will witness the transfer of the means of production into public ownership, one of Marx's most important demands. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, those who still await their liberation are redoubling their struggle for peace, freedom and justice.

Against the backdrop of these changes it becomes apparent what a prodigious feat Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels accomplished by transforming socialism from a utopian vision into a scientific doctrine. By infusing scientific socialism into the labour movement, they enabled the working class of all lands and the oppressed of this world to recognize their own strength and to use it to throw off the shackles of capitalism.

Just as the ideas of Karl Marx influenced the actions of the masses, they also had a lasting effect on the development of scientific and philosophical theory. No modern social science can escape the cogency of Marx's reasoning. Adopting a position on Marx has become a crucial element in intellectual and political debate.

Marx must take everlasting credit for arousing humanity to the realization that the future does not depend on obscure forces

outside our control. Nor will it be governed by the wishful thinking of all those "Marx-is-dead" theorists who are clamouring for a crusade against the Marxism of our era and who would prefer to see communism proscribed by a latter-day Inquisition and to give it a quiet burial so as to assure the ruling classes in their respective countries of their profits. What really determines the development of a society is the level and mode of production, the stage of economic development its people have attained. In our day, the existence of the USSR and of the world socialist system even makes it possible for the peoples of economically backward countries to move towards laying the foundations for socialism while skipping the capitalist path of development.

"And now as to myself," Marx noted, "no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production, (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."\*

According to Friedrich Engels, the basic thought running through all Marx's work, not least through the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, is that economic production and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom constitutes the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch. Consequently, ever since the dissolution of the primeval communal ownership of land all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various

\* Marx to J. Weydemeyer in New York. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1969, vol. 1, p. 528.



stages of social development. Finally, this struggle reaches a stage where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation and oppression.

This basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx, and the labour movement has always borne it in mind, for there can be no progressive development in the present or future if it is not a guide to action for all those who are endeavouring to lead humanity out of the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom. This awareness underlies the alliance policy of the revolutionary working-class parties, which varies in expression from one socialist country to another, depending on national realities.

It was one facet of his greatness that Karl Marx never looked upon his doctrine as something definitive and immune to any change. He always regarded practice as the proving ground for his theory. In fact, his own involvement in the revolutionary battles of his day provided a source of new ideas. He generalized from experience to influence the course of history yet again with fresh, heightened, theoretical insight. This is the clue to both the scientific and the creative nature of Marx's teachings, which are capable of answering new questions as they arise. It was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin who then took on the historical role of defending Marxism against all distortions and developing it to take account of imperialism, the highest and final stage of capitalism, and to project a strategy for the new era of transition to socialism.

The doctrine of Karl Marx is omnipotent because it is true. No one can deny its success, in spite of the difficulties which arise, for all kinds of reasons, in the course of building a new society. Compared with any exploitative society, real socialism is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Mankind finds itself here on uncharted territory never before explored in human history. The founders of scientific socialism did not offer any catch-all recipes nor did they ever have the slightest intention of doing so. What they did was to formulate fundamental truths and fundamental

perceptions. The leading parties in the socialist countries are working closely together, studying their experience of building the new society and tackling new problems jointly. In this way the theory outlined by Marx is constantly being enriched and standing its test as a guide to action.

Like Lenin after him, Marx was above all a revolutionary. His ambition was to contribute not just to the downfall of any government which happened to be flouting the interests and rights of the people, but to the overthrow of capitalist society and the institutions of government it had created. In many of his works, notably in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, he set out the view, first propounded in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, that the proletariat can do without the bourgeoisie but not vice versa. The bourgeoisie, he pointed out, cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, the relations of production. In this way it produces its own grave-diggers, the proletariat, by the thousands.

The current situation in the capitalist industrial nations furnishes striking evidence that the ruling class, even with the most advanced productive forces at its command, is unable to resolve the problems of the modern world in the interests of the people. We observe this in its attempts to make the people shoulder the burden of the crisis and thus keep profits high, in mass unemployment, in its inability to guarantee vocational training and secure job prospects to all young people leaving school. In the light of these symptoms, especially mass unemployment and the ravages of inflation, leading trade unionists have come to share the conclusion that the negative effects of the profit-oriented capitalist economy cannot be eliminated without plucking out the roots. I should like to put on record here that we have the highest regard for the strenuous efforts being made by the communist and workers' parties, by the trade unions in the capitalist countries and by the national liberation movements to enforce social improvements for the working people and to defend them.

Both in the socialist countries and in the capitalist countries



we are constantly running across fresh proof that Marxism is a vibrant theory which has lost nothing of its appeal. Serious bourgeois philosophers and economists these days cannot ignore Marx when they expound their views about the past, present and future of the human race. Even those politicians who dismiss his ideas as irrelevant on the grounds that he lived and worked under different conditions have to admit that our own age raises a number of questions which cannot be answered satisfactorily without some reference to Marx.

Take the question about the origin of political, economic and cultural crises, which it has become customary in the Western world to describe as crises of civilization. Take the sometimes rather helpless question about the causes of mass unemployment. The answers given by Marx, Engels and Lenin are very precise. The roots of these ills are well embedded in the capitalist system, with its pursuit of maximum profit. Take the subject of peace studies in the Western countries. Marx, Engels and Lenin gave very precise answers as to where wars come from and how they can be prevented.

Right from the outset, Marx considered the social emancipation of peoples and their liberation from the scourge of war to be twin tasks which the working class would have to accomplish in the course of fulfilling its historical mission. He was a sympathetic and fervent supporter of the peoples fighting against national and colonial oppression and striving for freedom and independence. At the same time, he was vigorously opposed to all wars which stemmed from the acquisitive and expansionist drive of the bourgeoisie.

In a well-known dictum Marx said that socialism is the embodiment of a society "whose international rule will be peace, because its national ruler will be everywhere the same—labour!"\* Indeed, there is no class or social group in a socialist society which

\* K. Marx, *The Civil War in France*, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1969, vol. 2, pp. 193–194.

stands to gain from armament and war or which threatens other nations. The working class does not need war to attain its goals.

Consequently, the revolutionary labour movement always looked upon preserving peace as one of its overriding concerns. It combined the struggle against bourgeois wars with the struggle for social progress. Today, however, the world situation is such that the danger of nuclear war overshadows the life of all nations, threatening an inferno which would amount to the self-annihilation of the human race. To prevent this happening, to guarantee a secure peace is the first imperative of our time. Only thus will it be possible to achieve further social progress and to resolve other social problems, indeed, to save human civilization.

With their policy of confrontation and arms-building, which they also seek to foist on their NATO allies, influential circles in the United States are clearly pursuing imperial designs. Their principal, albeit utterly unrealistic, aim is to gain military and strategic superiority over the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community in order to have a free hand in the world arena. Not surprisingly, therefore, hardly a day goes by without the US government invoking the thrice-familiar "threat from the East" which is, of course, a complete myth.

There is no lack of historical examples illustrating imperialism's urge to extend the area under its control and to dominate sources of raw materials, markets and spheres of influence. One need only think of German fascism and its lunatic plans, which culminated in the Second World War with all its suffering and destruction. Nowadays we find that US imperialism is claiming vast portions of the world as its own spheres of interest, be they in Europe, Africa, Asia or Latin America.

This policy tramples on the independence, sovereignty and rights of peoples: witness the creation of the so-called Rapid Deployment Force, which has the declared aim of suppressing progressive developments in various parts of the world. Simultaneously, NATO is extending its range beyond the confines of the alliance to include regions which imperialism is seeking to sub-



ordinate to its global interests. The United States is building up its military bases, and it has set up a command centre for space warfare. The most recent plans devised by the United States, which also envisage deploying missiles in space, would fling open the doors to a renewed escalation of the arms race and add to the likelihood of a war on earth.

It is part of the policy of confrontation to fan tensions in various regions of the world and to create new flashpoints, thereby poisoning the international situation still further and keeping the torch of war glimmering. This is very much apparent in the Middle East, where the United States in particular gives aid and comfort to Israel in its aggression against Lebanon, against the Palestinian people, and against Syria. Mounting dangers are emanating from the aggressive policies of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the continued occupation of Namibia and the efforts of the racist regime to destabilize the progressive states in the region. In the Caribbean, too, the US imperialists are resorting to a policy of threats, pressure and blackmail, which is chiefly designed to force socialist Cuba to its knees but which is also directed against Nicaragua, Grenada and the liberation movements in El Salvador and other countries in the region.

The most aggressive elements of imperialism have not even tried to conceal their speculations with a possible nuclear first strike and the consequent risk of a nuclear world war. It is only logical, given a policy like that, for them to force armament to reach astronomical levels. Let me simply recall here that US arms spending has gone up from \$ 144 billion in 1980 to \$ 285 billion this year and that the figure is planned to exceed \$ 400 billion in 1987. The only ones who derive economic benefit from this are the handful of giant arms companies, the merchants of death whose profits are soaring in spite of the crisis.

For the peoples of the world, however, every new round in the arms race represents a heavy burden. Not least, it is the developing nations who suffer. They find it much more difficult to carry out their national programmes, to overcome the legacy of centuries

of colonial rule. The growing arms exports of imperialist states, especially the USA, coupled with their high interest policies, tend to increase the indebtedness of many developing countries, which is bad enough as it is. According to recent estimates, this burden of debt exceeds \$ 600 billion. If the arms race is halted and practical measures are taken to bring about disarmament, enormous sums will become available for solving the urgent problems facing mankind.

The dangers to world peace are great today, but in our belief it is not only necessary but also possible to remove them. Those forces in the world which sincerely want peace justly draw encouragement from the fact that the Soviet Union and the socialist community represent the strongest bastion in the battle for this lofty aim. Socialism and peace are indivisible. As communists we are guided by the ideal which the German version of the old workers' song 'Hold the Fort' sums up in these words: "Work, bread and peace for all nations—that is our world."

It serves the interests of world peace that the awesome military potential brought forth by modern science and technology is not entirely concentrated in the hands of imperialism. Thanks to the defence capacity of the socialist community, this tremendous power to destroy has not yet been put to use. With the most aggressive elements of imperialism stepping up their policy of confrontation and arms-building, we consider it our internationalist duty to maintain our defences at whatever level the situation requires.

At the same time, the USSR, the GDR and the other states of the socialist community are leaving no stone unturned and have launched one initiative after another to achieve tangible and durable progress towards the safeguarding of peace. It was in this context that the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, meeting in Prague, submitted its well-known programme. It takes into account the interests of all parties, has enlivened the international dialogue on practicable ways towards limiting and reducing armaments and is proving to be a constructive factor in finding and implementing practicable solutions.



We regard the solemn pledge of the Soviet Union not to be the first to use nuclear weapons as a move of world political importance and urge the other nuclear powers to undertake a similar pledge. The states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization are prepared to take the greatest possible steps towards disarmament in accordance with the principle of equality and equal security. As things stand now, more weapons do not mean more, but less security. So it really is necessary to make peace with fewer and fewer weapons. In order to ward off the threat of a nuclear inferno, it is extremely important to prevent NATO from deploying new US nuclear first-strike weapons in Western Europe. We advocate a genuine "zero option", which means a nuclear-free Europe that can ensure our continent a peaceful future.

As you know, we therefore supported the Swedish proposal to establish a zone in Central Europe that would be free from battlefield nuclear weapons, and declared our readiness to make the entire territory of the GDR available for the purpose. The creation of such a zone would be a valuable contribution towards diminishing the risk of war, enabling the process of détente to continue and deepening international cooperation. It is and remains the GDR's priority to play an active part in attaining these goals. We set great store by the proposal submitted in Prague to conclude a treaty between the Warsaw Pact and NATO on mutual renunciation of the use of military force and on the maintenance of peaceful relations.

We fully endorse the approach adopted by the USSR in the Geneva talks on the limitation and reduction of nuclear armaments, which is aimed at achieving concrete results. To this end, Yuri Andropov submitted a number of proposals which met with a wide, largely positive, response amongst the general public, with voices from many quarters demanding to know when the United States will drop the policy of obstruction it has pursued so far and help to produce some constructive agreements.

Peoples and governments in many countries of Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America are coming out in favour of establishing

nuclear-free zones in their regions and dampening hotbeds of tension and conflict. We heartily support the relevant initiatives taken on this matter by India, Mexico, Venezuela and Nicaragua as well as Arab and African countries.

We consider the Non-Aligned Movement to be a mighty force which can assert the common interest in secure peace on all continents. Its influence is growing in the struggle for equitable international relations, both political and economic. The 7th Summit Conference which these states held in Delhi confirmed this most impressively. In our view, the movement is making an important contribution towards thwarting the imperialist strategy of confrontation and defending peace and the rights of the peoples.

Experience all over the world indicates that communists are reliable allies of the worldwide peace movement. They work actively and with great initiative for the common goals. Since the conditions for the struggle of communist and workers' parties vary from one country to another, it is not surprising that they sometimes formulate different ideas about the forms and methods which should be adopted in the campaign for peace and social progress. But the overriding concern is always safeguarding and stabilizing peace. We consider this to be the priority target for the entire working-class movement, irrespective of any views which its parties or organizations might hold on this or that issue of life in their respective countries. All in all, the international working-class movement has a considerable peace potential at its disposal. Once again we reaffirm our readiness to offer our hand in a spirit of comradeship to all national revolutionary parties and liberation movements, all socialist and social democratic parties, trade unions and other organizations to bring this potential fully to bear.

Before this forum which has gathered to honour Karl Marx, I would like to suggest that right now all political and social forces who sincerely want peace absolutely must work together, irrespective of differing political programmes, ideological positions and religious confessions, across class barriers and everything



that may separate us, in order to save the peoples from the catastrophe of a nuclear war. The differences will not disappear as a result. Rather, the defence of peace as the most precious possession of humankind is a matter of priority, a common interest which unites us, although at the same time the commitment to peace presents much scope for mutually beneficial cooperation in the most wide-ranging fields.

The maintenance of world peace is a matter that concerns everybody, including those who do not aspire to bring about fundamental social change. Certainly, nobody has ever had a monopoly on the desire for peace and the willingness to fight for it. Ever since there have been wars, with all their suffering, sacrifice and destruction, the best representatives of the peoples and various classes and organizations have bravely resisted aggressive threats. But never before has the human race been confronted by such a lethal danger as today, never was it so pressed to fight for peace. Nuclear world war would even turn the idea of making profit into an illusion. And thus an historical opportunity is born for the most wide-ranging forces to draw together in the struggle for peace and for this struggle to grow broader than it ever was in the past.

There is no reasonable alternative to the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems. Its principles, whose implementation bore such positive fruit especially in the course of the seventies, must become the norm for international relations. We, too, believe that the policy of détente is the only way to prevent a nuclear inferno, the only chance to achieve reliable peace.

Our Party bases all its endeavours on the responsibility it feels for the survival and prosperity not only of people today, but also of future generations. We are especially aware of this responsibility because our country is situated directly at the dividing line between socialism and capitalism, between the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO. Besides, our sense of responsibility is imbued with the lessons of history, with the fact that two devastat-

ing world wars emanated from German soil. Peace, and peace again, is the supreme maxim underlying our policies.

Comrades,  
Distinguished guests,

On German soil, in the land of his birth, in the German Democratic Republic, the ideas which Karl Marx gave to the working class are becoming reality, ideas which enabled it to organize social conditions that would be worthy of human beings. It was here that a new, a socialist Germany came into being under the leadership of the united working class and its party, the SED. Everything it has achieved so far and everything it is striving for illustrates the potential which real socialism offers. During your stay in our country you will be able to see all this for yourselves and form your own opinions.

In 1945, after a long road riddled with struggles, which brought hard-won victories but also bitter defeats, the revolutionary German working-class movement was able to set about radically changing people's very existence. This great opportunity had been opened up when the glorious Soviet army and the armies of the other states allied against Hitler succeeded in smashing Nazism. The German Democratic Republic put it to effective use, and the proof lies in the results achieved over more than three-and-a-half decades of a development that has taken place in permanent harsh conflict with imperialism and reaction.

From the very beginning, this development has been linked with the international transformations that took place after the Second World War, in the course of which the world socialist system emerged. As cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries grew closer, it became easier to solve internal tasks and problems. That awareness came to pervade socialist construction on every front, and we have been guided by it at all times. The establishment of a new order had been tried out in the land of Lenin with due regard for the objective laws of social development. Thus the USSR gathered a wealth of



experience which is of immense value to all progressive mankind, a treasure trove on which all revolutionary parties can draw in leading their peoples to socialism.

Our Party did this, too, when it applied the general laws of socialist construction to our specific national circumstances. Given the chaotic material and cultural legacy of imperialism it would have been inappropriate to declare socialism the order of the day. The antifascist democratic transformation ushered in an organic revolutionary process during which socialist construction eventually took place. A positive factor in the process was that under capitalist conditions our country had already attained a relatively advanced level of industrial development.

By setting up the first socialist state of workers and farmers on German soil, the German Democratic Republic, the working class decided the issue of power, the fundamental issue of any revolution, in its favour. This brought confirmation of the Marxist-Leninist perception that the Party's role as the leading force is indispensable to the liberation of the working class and the successful construction of socialism. In the spirit of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the SED has, by maintaining close and trustful relations with the working people, lived up to its duty. In its work it has always been able to learn from the fraternal parties, and, in turn, it has contributed insights of its own to the international store of revolutionary experience.

On German soil, too, freedom and democracy, those great ideals of the working-class movement, are genuine achievements which socialism has given the working people for the first time in their history. As Karl Marx demonstrated, these ideals are dependent on the character of the economic and political power wielded by the ruling class, whichever it may be at the time. In a state of workers and farmers, the toiling masses are the masters of their destiny, running their own social affairs. Otherwise it would not be possible to build socialism successfully.

The SED's policy of alliance has become very much a part of socialist democracy, bringing the working class, the peasantry,

the intellectuals and the rest of the working population closer and closer together and thereby releasing major creative potentials. This is borne out characteristically by the cooperation between the SED and the other parties and mass organizations in the National Front of the GDR, which is carried out in a comradely spirit. Their political representatives share responsibility at all government levels. The Democratic Farmers' Party of Germany, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany and the National Democratic Party of Germany make their own contribution towards shaping advanced socialist society, and we rate this very highly. Today's society in the GDR only knows classes and strata which live from their own work, and so they have the same basic interests. In our republic a large-scale process is under way in which the various classes and strata are moving closer together, producing an increasingly pronounced political and moral unity among the people.

In the early seventies our Party found itself for the first time in a position to lay down a complete spectrum of tasks for building advanced socialist society in the GDR. We regard them as the key to an historic process of profound political, economic, social, intellectual and cultural changes. In order to press ahead it is necessary to adopt a planned approach towards developing at a high level all the advantages and driving forces of socialism, every aspect and sphere of social life, the forces and relations of production, social and political relations, science and education, socialist ideology and culture, the whole complex of working and living conditions and also national defence. As our experience has shown, the multitude of individual problems arising from socialist construction can be solved successfully if one adopts a principled Marxist-Leninist position.

A period of new, dynamic advances has begun in the GDR. Our guests from abroad will doubtless understand that our people are proud of their socialist homeland, of all they have created with their hard work. As things stand now, the GDR is a modern socialist industrial nation with a highly productive agricultural



sector, an efficient education system and a strong scientific potential. The working class was left all those years ago with the harsh legacy of the war and what can only be called a truncated economy, severed from its historical context. All the efficient productive forces which the GDR now possesses, embracing almost every branch of modern industry, have grown under socialism as social property.

While the national income of our republic was 24,100 million Marks in 1949, it had risen to over 200,000 million Marks, or almost sevenfold, by 1982. That was a gloomy, crisis-ridden year for all the major capitalist industrial countries, but the GDR attained a 4.3 per cent growth in production over the previous year, at the same time reducing unit consumption of energy and raw materials by six per cent. The driving forces of socialism proved their vigour even under difficult circumstances. This is also reflected in our agriculture, which is organized on a cooperative basis with subsidiary farming having played a specific part from the very beginning. The Association of Allotment Gardeners and Small Stock Breeders with its 1.2 million members makes a considerable contribution towards feeding the people.

In implementing its economic and social policies as a complex whole, our Party is responding to objective requirements. Since higher output is used in substantial measure to improve the working and living conditions of working people, a better life remains no distant promise. Good work pays off now. This knowledge releases a great deal of social energy, mobilizing above all the skills of the people. The total work force in this country is 8,368,000, of which more than 6,860,000, or 82 per cent, have completed some course of training. This is a great achievement and at the same time a tremendous economic opportunity.

The economic strategy adopted for the eighties by our 10th Party Congress is based on Marx's theory of reproduction. An interesting factor is that many of his findings are proving to be of growing relevance as the GDR's economy strides along the road of intensively extended reproduction. The law formulated by Marx

on the economy of time, his profound analyses of labour productivity as an economic and social phenomenon and of the economy of production conditions in general again and again provide us with answers to practical questions.

Marx was fully convinced that the productive force of human labour would rapidly unfold for the good of the people in a society which was free from exploitation, once the working people were armed with an understanding of the laws of social development and had taken the enormous project of construction into their own hands. Socialist competition, which is organized by the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions with its membership of over nine million, is a powerful motor in the process. Typically, the mass campaign by the GDR's working people to pay tribute to Karl Marx by producing particularly good economic results is culminating in a pledge by millions to increase labour productivity by over one per cent more than was planned for 1983, thus enabling the output of goods worth an extra 3,800 million Marks. This is an initiative which will bring many positive repercussions for all our people.

To attain the required pace of economic progress in our country, we must combine the advantages of socialism more closely with the scientific and technological revolution. Karl Marx described science as the soundest form of wealth, attaching great value to it for the development of the productive forces. The status it enjoys in our society does full justice to this. We earmark a considerable portion of our national income for research and development, and by international standards we compare well. However, we make no secret of the fact that socialism, in our view, offers greater opportunities for putting science to good use than we have taken advantage of so far, and we are making considerable efforts in this field.

The emergence of new economic structures goes hand in glove with scientific and technological progress, and at the same time new challenges arise for the individual. There is indeed no lack of problems. However, the solutions turn out to be quite different



when science and technology are instruments for improving the lives of the working people, instead of being abused to reinforce the exploitation of man by man. In the GDR, economic rationalization is carried out together with the working people. Scientific and social progress are two sides of the same coin.

As we know, the development of the productive forces under capitalism comes into ever sharper conflict with the relations of production, causing deep crises in the economy and within society. Socialism, by contrast, offers the opportunity of perfecting the relations of production along planned lines, paving the way to development of the productive forces. Here, too, there is an objective interrelationship.

In the GDR industrial and construction capacity has been organized in the form of combines, which pool our huge material and intellectual resources and make it possible to organize production efficiently from the research stage to sale. These combines are firmly integrated into the overall pattern of management and planning set up on the principle of democratic centralism. The general managers of these combines are working as proxies of the workers' and farmers' state, with considerable powers to ensure that plan targets can be fulfilled. The formation of combines, a profound change in the structure of industrial management which took place some time ago, has proved successful and became the stepping-stone to many further improvements.

The crux of the matter is to harmonize the interests of the combines, factories and individual work teams more and more cohesively with social requirements, that is to gear them to highly efficient management. Naturally, it is not possible to copy capitalist methods; approaches can only be found by perfecting the socialist planned economy itself.

The 10th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany characterized the economy as the area in which the most important social policy decisions are taken. At the same time it underlined the growing importance of interaction between development processes in the various different spheres. A flourishing

economy must provide the means to permit healthy progress in many other spheres within the framework of our far-reaching goals. This includes measures to protect the natural environment. Then, of course, the GDR is actively committed to anti-imperialist solidarity and assists numerous developing countries as best it can in building up their economies and education systems. Under socialism, the economy is a top-priority state concern and the business of every individual.

The attitudes of working people towards economic issues are governed decisively by the fact that the right to work is fully guaranteed and that all-round living standards are secure and continually being improved by rising productivity. People think and act as the owners of the means of production; they feel an increasing sense of responsibility for every item of the economic account.

If we take a long-term view, economic growth and output lead to something more than individual improvements in the life of the people. Placed in the service of a consistent policy for the good of the people, they make it possible to tackle social problems, to foster those qualitative changes in the conditions of life which building advanced socialist society requires. A characteristic example is the housing construction programme, the linchpin of our social policy. More than 1.8 million flats have been completed since 1971 alone. The housing improvements that this has brought put us well along the road to achieving our Party's target of solving the social problems of housing by 1990. This means providing between 2.8 and 3 million dwellings. Rents, however, will remain at their current low level.

It is a basic principle in our country to grant all children the opportunity to enjoy a good education. We can see that in capitalist society, where the educational privileges of the well-to-do have never been abolished, a right like this would be unthinkable. The single-class school, for example, was once a widespread institution in this country, too, especially in rural areas, but the GDR closed down the last one in 1959. The backbone of our present-day so-



cialist education system is the ten-year general polytechnical school. All our children have the same opportunities for general education and vocational training. Great value is attached in the GDR to implementing communist education ideals, imparting a high level of knowledge, conveying the best of what the human race has created in terms of intellectual wealth. Not only has the number of university and college students multiplied since the capitalist era, but their social composition has changed in favour of the working class and women, testifying to the developments that have taken place in our socialist system of higher and technical education.

Young people are not only certain of a sound vocational training but also of a job. But furthermore great trust is placed in them in all walks of life, and they are able to take on considerable responsibilities. They have grown up to play an important role within society, and, under the leadership of the Free German Youth, their socialist youth organization, they have proved that they deserve it.

Very much is being done in the GDR to enable women to make better practical use of their equal rights within society. Comprehensive support is given to families, especially to children. It is a matter of course in our country that all citizens can avail themselves of the right to recreation and medical care. The services of our socialist health system, which are free of charge to the patient, not only benefit the working people, but are also noteworthy by international standards.

The same can doubtless be said of our flourishing socialist culture, the broad participation in mass sports, the evolution of socialist morality and ethics. And thus a socialist mode of life is taking shape amongst our people.

As can be seen, social progress calls for hard work and the resolution of multiple problems which are not always predictable. Despite all the positive achievements of socialism, one should not forget that it is being built in a world full of contradictions and full of turbulence. The safeguarding of peace and the all-round

development of socialist society condition one another and must be achieved at one and the same time. Great things have already been accomplished, greater challenges are still in store for us. By further fashioning advanced socialist society in the GDR, we are laying the groundwork for the gradual transition to communism.

The GDR is in the fortunate position of following this path in fraternal alliance with the Soviet Union and the other countries of our community. This indestructible alliance has been at the root of its success and remains the basis for its secure prospects. Whatever we do for the good of our own people will also strengthen the great family of socialist countries. The one cannot be separated from the other.

Comrades,  
Distinguished guests,

Karl Marx was, as Friedrich Engels aptly remarked, one of those outstanding men who are only born a few to a century. But it has not always befallen even these to set such a stamp on posterity. One hundred years after his death, the historical changes inspired by his great ideas which have taken place in the lives of humankind are the most enduring monument to the great theoretician and revolutionary. The cause of socialism, national liberation and the struggle for a peaceful future for all peoples will triumph.

Thank you.



Speech by

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