



In October, 1917, forty-six years after the Paris Commune, the workers of Russia under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, with Lenin at its head, established the first workers' state rooted in permanence. These Russian Communards directed from Smolny by Lenin—troops of workers from the factories, the Aurora steaming up the Neva, and the soldiers and sailors who joined the Proletarian Revolution—defeated the bourgeois government under the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets."

"The Paris Commune," said Lenin, "was the first step." The Socialist Society now being built in the Soviet Union is the beginning of the workers' march to a World Proletarian Commune

The Marxist Leninist

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Editorial

COMRADE Kanu Sanyal passed away on 23rd March. We join all comrades and friends in extending heart felt condolence at his death.

In the previous issues of *The Marxist-Leninist* we have repeatedly quoted that “the ideological political line determines everything” in carrying forward the revolutionary movement. History teaches that even the extremely great revolutionary activism of the Indo-Chinese peoples, especially of Vietnam, in the 1970s could not save the ICM from the severe setbacks it was confronting. In the absence of a vision and approach about the revolutionary alternative to the capitalist-imperialist system in theory and practice, the concept that only revolutionary socialism can be the alternative to imperialism was abandoned. The weaknesses in understanding the post-Second World War neo-colonial *avatar* of imperialism under US leadership and developing a scientific approach to it coupled with the shortcomings during the socialist construction where the political power was captured had, in the main, led to these setbacks, dragging down the socialist countries and Communist parties to capitalist, neo-liberal degeneration.

That in spite of the colossal setbacks to the ICM and to the movement in India, the notion that it can be resolved through some pragmatism or intensified activism is proved suicidal. Emulating Lenin’s Struggle against the leaders of the Second International, what is required today is an uncompromising struggle against all brands of apologists and executioners of neo-colonialism. Starting from 1982 we are engaged in this theoretical debate to develop the theory and practise of Indian revolution. As it is a matter of paramount importance, we are trying hard to get more and more sections involved in this debate.

That is why in the earlier issues of *The Marxist-Leninist* we had explained our intention “to make it a platform for theoretical struggle by all the Marxist-Leninist forces cutting down the boundaries of present organisational divisions.” But in spite of our appeal so far no such contributions are received. Still we shall persist in our appeal for articles, criticisms and notes to develop the theoretical struggle for charting the path of revolution.

Meanwhile, a proposal is received from some individuals with a revolutionary perspective, but who are still not part of the CPI(ML), for bringing out a theoretical journal with a broader editorial board including comrades from outside CPI(ML). In principle we have accepted this

proposal. After the practical problems are sorted out, we may start it as yet another effort to launch ideological struggle for developing the theory and practice of proletarian revolution according to present conditions. Our appeal to the Communist Revolutionaries is to come forward without any inhibitions and to participate in this theoretical debate, putting forward concrete suggestions meanwhile on the healthy ways to conduct it.

UNDERSTANDING ABOUT PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY

IN THE editorial to the January issue of The ML we had stated: “The next issue of The Marxist-Leninist shall focus on the cardinal issue of developing the understanding about proletarian democracy transcending the concepts of bourgeois democracy based on the theoretical contributions of Marx to Mao and practice in the erstwhile socialist countries.” The propagandists of the bourgeois democracy, utilising the powerful monopoly media have succeeded to a very great extent to establish that the British and US system of democracy or any other forms of bourgeois democracy practiced are the highest forms of democracy achieved by human society so far. They give superlative importance to the forms practiced, and conceal the fact that in content it is nothing but dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to impose the barbarous capitalist imperialist system or the rule of the comprador classes. During the transition from *laissez faire* capitalism to monopoly capitalism and to its neo-colonial, neo-liberal *avatar*, whatever democratic content it had is lost to a great extent. Even in countries where the ‘best forms’ of bourgeois democracy is practiced, it has become corrupt from top to bottom, bureaucratic, militarist and increasingly autocratic. As large sections of erstwhile communist parties have degenerated from the proletarian revolutionary path and embraced bourgeois democracy, that is dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in practice, the debate on this question has considerably weakened.

It was against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie practiced under the sign board of bourgeois parliamentary or presidential systems of government, Marx had put forward the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat, which is proletarian democracy in action during the period of transition from capitalism to communism. Combining with the weaknesses manifested in the erstwhile socialist countries in its practice and counter-posing multi-party parliamentary democracy as practiced in India like countries emulating the British practice, a fierce attack on the theory of dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletarian democracy in practice after capture of the political power by the working class is taking place all over the world, often utilising most vulgar methods, refusing to recognise the proletarian democratic concepts sought to be developed

from Marx to Mao, and depicting the sole practice of state power in the erstwhile socialist countries after their degeneration to the bureaucratic capitalist system, including the practice in present China or North Korea or Vietnam as the 'real' proletarian democracy in practice.

It is in this context an in-depth discussion is needed to bring out the basic teachings of Marx to Mao on the dictatorship of the proletariat and how they approached the lessons of Paris Commune, the Soviets in Soviet Union and People's Communes in China. Based on these the debate on the understanding about bourgeois democracy which is nothing but dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the comprador classes in action and the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is proletarian democracy in action during the transition period from capitalism to socialist transformation to communism should be developed. It is with this perspective Marx's analysis of the lessons of Paris Commune, Lenin's contributions in the evaluation of the Paris Commune and on transition from capitalism to communism in the III and V chapters of ***The State and Revolution***, and brief excerpts from Mao on People's Communes, which could be collected, are included in this volume. Besides, an article on the approach to proletarian democracy prepared for ***Aneek*** (Bengali monthly journal) by K.N. Ramachandran is also added.

Apart from these, two articles on the character of Indian state and society published in 1995 and 1997 in ***Red Star*** are reproduced to continue the debate on this question. Once again we call for contributions from all sections for developing the debates on cardinal questions of political economy and proletarian democracy.

Editorial Board

The Paris Commune

Karl Marx

ON the dawn of March 18, Paris arose to the thunder-burst of “Vive la Commune!” What is the Commune, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind?

“The proletarians of Paris,” said the Central Committee in its manifesto of March 18, “amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs.... They have understood that it is their imperious duty, and their absolute right, to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power.”

But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.

The centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature – organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labor – originates from the days of absolute monarchy, serving nascent middle class society as a mighty weapon in its struggle against feudalism. Still, its development remained clogged by all manner of medieval rubbish, seigniorial rights, local privileges, municipal and guild monopolies, and provincial constitutions. The gigantic broom of the French Revolution of the 18th century swept away all these relics of bygone times, thus clearing simultaneously the social soil of its last hindrances to the superstructure of the modern state edifice raised under the First Empire, itself the offspring of the coalition wars of old semi-feudal Europe against modern France.

During the subsequent regimes, the government, placed under parliamentary control – that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes – became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes; but its political character changed simultaneously with the economic changes of society. At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labor, the state power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labor, of a public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism.

After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief. The Revolution of 1830, resulting in the transfer of government from the landlords to the capitalists, transferred it from the more remote to the more direct antagonists of the working men. The bourgeois republicans, who, in the name of the February Revolution, took the state power, used it for the June [1848] massacres, in order to convince the working class that “social” republic means the republic entrusting their social subjection, and in order to convince the royalist bulk of the bourgeois and landlord class that they might safely leave the cares and emoluments of government to the bourgeois “republicans.”

However, after their one heroic exploit of June, the bourgeois republicans had, from the front, to fall back to the rear of the “Party of Order” – a combination formed by all the rival fractions and factions of the appropriating classes. The proper form of their joint-stock government was the parliamentary republic, with Louis Bonaparte for its president. Theirs was a regime of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult towards the “vile multitude.”

If the parliamentary republic, as M. Thiers said, “divided them [the different fractions of the ruling class] least”, it opened an abyss between that class and the whole body of society outside their spare ranks. The restraints by which their own divisions had under former regimes still checked the state power, were removed by their union; and in view of the threatening upheaval of the proletariat, they now used that state power mercilessly and ostentatiously as the national war engine of capital against labor.

In their uninterrupted crusade against the producing masses, they were, however, bound not only to invest the executive with continually increased powers of repression, but at the same time to divest their own parliamentary stronghold – the National Assembly – one by one, of all its own means of defence against the Executive. The Executive, in the person of Louis Bonaparte, turned them out. The natural offspring of the “Party of Order” republic was the Second Empire.

The empire, with the coup d’etat for its birth certificate, universal suffrage for its sanction, and the sword for its sceptre, professed to rest upon the peasantry, the large mass of producers not directly involved in the struggle of capital and labor. It professed to save the working class by breaking down parliamentarism, and, with it, the undisguised subserviency of government to the propertied classes. It professed to save the propertied classes by upholding their economic supremacy over the working class; and, finally, it professed to unite all classes by reviving for all the chimera of national glory.

In reality, it was the only form of government possible at a time when the

bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation. It was acclaimed throughout the world as the savior of society. Under its sway, bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself. Its industry and commerce expanded to colossal dimensions; financial swindling celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the masses was set off by a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious and debased luxury. The state power, apparently soaring high above society and the very hotbed of all its corruptions. Its own rottenness, and the rottenness of the society it had saved, were laid bare by the bayonet of Prussia, herself eagerly bent upon transferring the supreme seat of that regime from Paris to Berlin. Imperialism is, at the same time, the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the state power which nascent middle class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labor by capital.

The direct antithesis to the empire was the Commune. The cry of “social republic,” with which the February Revolution was ushered in by the Paris proletariat, did but express a vague aspiration after a republic that was not only to supercede the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself. The Commune was the positive form of that republic.

Paris, the central seat of the old governmental power, and, at the same time, the social stronghold of the French working class, had risen in arms against the attempt of Thiers and the Rurals to restore and perpetuate that old governmental power bequeathed to them by the empire. Paris could resist only because, in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army, and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.

Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workman's wage*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased

to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the state was laid into the hands of the Commune.

Having once got rid of the standing army and the police – the physical force elements of the old government – the Commune was anxious to break the spiritual force of repression, the “parson-power”, by the disestablishment and disendowment of all churches as proprietary bodies. The priests were sent back to the recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the apostles.

The whole of the educational institutions were opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of church and state. Thus, not only was education made accessible to all, but science itself freed from the fetters which class prejudice and governmental force had imposed upon it.

The judicial functionaries were to be divested of that sham independence which had but served to mask their abject subserviency to all succeeding governments to which, in turn, they had taken, and broken, the oaths of allegiance. Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable.

The Paris Commune was, of course, to serve as a model to all the great industrial centres of France. The communal regime once established in Paris and the secondary centres, the old centralized government would in the provinces, too, have to give way to the self-government of the producers.

In a rough sketch of national organization, which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communities of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandat impératif* (formal instructions) of his constituents. The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged by Communal and thereafter responsible agents.

The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by Communal Constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence.

While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well-known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supercede universal suffrage by hierarchical investiture.

It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterparts of older, and even defunct, forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks with the modern state power, has been mistaken for a reproduction of the medieval Communes, which first preceded, and afterward became the substratum of, that very state power. The Communal Constitution has been mistaken for an attempt to break up into the federation of small states, as dreamt of by Montesquieu and the Girondins, that unity of great nations which, if originally brought about by political force, has now become a powerful coefficient of social production. The antagonism of the Commune against the state power has been mistaken for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralization. Peculiar historical circumstances may have prevented the classical development, as in France, of the bourgeois form of government, and may have allowed, as in England, to complete the great central state organs by corrupt vestries, jobbing councillors, and ferocious poor-law guardians in the towns, and virtually hereditary magistrates in the counties.

The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the state parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society. By this one act, it would have initiated the regeneration of France.

The provincial French middle class saw in the Commune an attempt to restore the sway their order had held over the country under Louis Philippe, and which, under Louis Napoleon, was supplanted by the pretended rule of the country over the towns. In reality, the Communal Constitution brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the working men, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local municipal liberty, but no longer as a check upon the now superseded state power. It could only enter into the head of a Bismarck – who, when not engaged on his

intrigues of blood and iron, always likes to resume his old trade, so befitting his mental calibre, of contributor to *Kladderadatsch* (the Berlin *Punch*) – it could only enter into such a head to ascribe to the Paris Commune aspirations after the caricature of the old French municipal organization of 1791, the Prussian municipal constitution which degrades the town governments to mere secondary wheels in the police machinery of the Prussian state. The Commune made that catchword of bourgeois revolutions – cheap government – a reality by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure: the standing army and state functionarism. Its very existence presupposed the non-existence of monarchy, which, in Europe at least, is the normal incumbrance and indispensable cloak of class rule. It supplied the republic with the basis of really democratic institutions. But neither cheap government nor the “true republic” was its ultimate aim; they were its mere concomitants.

The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which construed it in their favor, show that it was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all the previous forms of government had been emphatically repressive. Its true secret was this:

It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labor.

Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion. The political rule of the producer cannot co-exist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundation upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. With labor emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labor ceases to be a class attribute.

It is a strange fact. In spite of all the tall talk and all the immense literature, for the last 60 years, about emancipation of labor, no sooner do the working men anywhere take the subject into their own hands with a will, than uprises at once all the apologetic phraseology of the mouthpieces of present society with its two poles of capital and wages-slavery (the landlord now is but the sleeping partner of the capitalist), as if the capitalist society was still in its purest state of virgin innocence, with its antagonisms still undeveloped, with its delusions still unexploded, with its prostitute realities not yet laid bare. The Commune, they exclaim, intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilization!

Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class property which makes the labor of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land, and capital, now chiefly the means

of enslaving and exploiting labor, into mere instruments of free and associated labor. But this is communism, “impossible” communism! Why, those members of the ruling classes who are intelligent enough to perceive the impossibility of continuing the present system – and they are many – have become the obtrusive and full-mouthed apostles of co-operative production. If co-operative production is not to remain a sham and a snare; if it is to supersede the capitalist system; if united co-operative societies are to regulate national production upon common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and periodical convulsions which are the fatality of capitalist production – what else, gentlemen, would it be but communism, “possible” communism?

The working class did not expect miracles from the Commune. They have no ready-made utopias to introduce *par decret du peuple*. They know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistably tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant. In the full consciousness of their historic mission, and with the heroic resolve to act up to it, the working class can afford to smile at the coarse invective of the gentlemen’s gentlemen with pen and inkhorn, and at the didactic patronage of well-wishing bourgeois-doctrinaires, pouring forth their ignorant platitudes and sectarian crotchets in the oracular tone of scientific infallibility.

When the Paris Commune took the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the governmental privilege of their “natural superiors,” and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed it at salaries the highest of which barely amounted to one-fifth what, according to high scientific authority, is the minimum required for a secretary to a certain metropolitan school-board – the old world writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the Red Flag, the symbol of the Republic of Labor, floating over the Hotel de Ville.

And yet, this was the first revolution in which the working class was openly acknowledged as the only class capable of social initiative, even by the great bulk of the Paris middle class – shopkeepers, tradesmen, merchants – the wealthy capitalist alone excepted. The Commune had saved them by a sagacious settlement of that ever recurring cause of dispute among the middle class themselves – the debtor and creditor accounts. The same portion of the middle class, after they had assisted in putting down the working men’s insurrection of June 1848, had been at once unceremoniously sacrificed to their creditors by the then Constituent Assembly. But this was not their only motive for now rallying around the working class. They felt there was but one alternative – the

Commune, or the empire – under whatever name it might reappear. The empire had ruined them economically by the havoc it made of public wealth, by the wholesale financial swindling it fostered, by the props it lent to the artificially accelerated centralization of capital, and the concomitant expropriation of their own ranks. It had suppressed them politically, it had shocked them morally by its orgies, it had insulted their Voltairianism by handing over the education of their children to the *frères Ignorantins*, it had revolted their national feeling as Frenchmen by precipitating them headlong into a war which left only one equivalent for the ruins it made – the disappearance of the empire. In fact, after the exodus from Paris of the high Bonapartist and capitalist *bohème*, the true middle class Party of Order came out in the shape of the “Union Republicaine”, enrolling themselves under the colors of the Commune and defending it against the wilful misconstructions of Thiers. Whether the gratitude of this great body of the middle class will stand the present severe trial, time must show.

The Commune was perfectly right in telling the peasants that “its victory was their only hope”. Of all the lies hatched at Versailles and re-echoed by the glorious European penny-a-liner, one of the most tremendous was that the Rurals represented the French peasantry. Think only of the love of the French peasant for the men to whom, after 1815, he had to pay the milliard indemnity. In the eyes of the French peasant, the very existence of a great landed proprietor is in itself an encroachment on his conquests of 1789. The bourgeois, in 1848, had burdened his plot of land with the additional tax of 45 cents, in the franc; but then he did so in the name of the revolution; while now he had fomented a civil war against revolution, to shift on to the peasant’s shoulders the chief load of the 5 milliards of indemnity to be paid to the Prussian. The Commune, on the other hand, in one of its first proclamations, declared that the true originators of the war would be made to pay its cost. The Commune would have delivered the peasant of the blood tax – would have given him a cheap government – transformed his present blood-suckers, the notary, advocate, executor, and other judicial vampires, into salaried communal agents, elected by, and responsible to, himself. It would have freed him of the tyranny of the *garde champêtre*, the gendarme, and the prefect; would have put enlightenment by the schoolmaster in the place of stultification by the priest. And the French peasant is, above all, a man of reckoning. He would find it extremely reasonable that the pay of the priest, instead of being extorted by the tax-gatherer, should only depend upon the spontaneous action of the parishioners’ religious instinct. Such were the great immediate boons which the rule of the Commune – and that rule alone – held out to the French peasantry. It is, therefore, quite superfluous here to expatiate upon the more complicated but vital problems which the Commune alone was able, and at the same time compelled, to solve in favor of the peasant – viz., the hypothecary debt, lying like an incubus upon his parcel of soil, the *prolétariat foncier* (the rural proletariat), daily growing upon it, and his expropriation from it enforced, at a more and more rapid rate, by the very

development of modern agriculture and the competition of capitalist farming.

The French peasant had elected Louis Bonaparte president of the Republic; but the Party of Order created the empire. What the French peasant really wants he commenced to show in 1849 and 1850, by opposing his *maire* to the government's prefect, his school-master to the government's priest, and himself to the government's gendarme. All the laws made by the Party of Order in January and February 1850 were avowed measures of repression against the peasant. The peasant was a Bonapartist, because the Great Revolution, with all its benefits to him, was, in his eyes, personified in Napoleon. This delusion, rapidly breaking down under the Second Empire (and in its very nature hostile to the Rurals), this prejudice of the past, how could it have withstood the appeal of the Commune to the living interests and urgent wants of the peasantry?

The Rurals – this was, in fact, their chief apprehension – knew that three months' free communication of Communal Paris with the provinces would bring about a general rising of the peasants, and hence their anxiety to establish a police blockade around Paris, so as to stop the spread of the rinderpest [cattle pest – contagious disease].

If the Commune was thus the true representative of all the healthy elements of French society, and therefore the truly national government, it was, at the same time, as a working men's government, as the bold champion of the emancipation of labor, emphatically international. Within sight of that Prussian army, that had annexed to Germany two French provinces, the Commune annexed to France the working people all over the world.

The Second Empire had been the jubilee of cosmopolitan blacklegism, the rakes of all countries rushing in at its call for a share in its orgies and in the plunder of the French people. Even at this moment, the right hand of Thiers is Ganessco, the foul Wallachian, and his left hand is Markovskiy, the Russian spy. The Commune admitted all foreigners to the honor of dying for an immortal cause. Between the foreign war lost by their treason, and the civil war fomented by their conspiracy with the foreign invader, the bourgeoisie had found the time to display their patriotism by organizing police hunts upon the Germans in France. The Commune made a German working man [Leo Frankel] its Minister of Labor. Thiers, the bourgeoisie, the Second Empire, had continually deluded Poland by loud professions of sympathy, while in reality betraying her to, and doing the dirty work of, Russia. The Commune honored the heroic sons of Poland [J. Dabrowski and W. Wróblewski] by placing them at the head of the defenders of Paris. And, to broadly mark the new era of history it was conscious of initiating, under the eyes of the conquering Prussians on one side, and the Bonapartist army, led by Bonapartist generals, on the other, the Commune pulled down that colossal symbol of martial glory, the Vendôme Column.

The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence.

Its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people. Such were the abolition of the nightwork of journeymen bakers; the prohibition, under penalty, of the employers' practice to reduce wages by levying upon their workpeople fines under manifold pretexts – a process in which the employer combines in his own person the parts of legislator, judge, and executor, and filches the money to boot. Another measure of this class was the surrender to associations of workmen, under reserve of compensation, of all closed workshops and factories, no matter whether the respective capitalists had absconded or preferred to strike work.

The financial measures of the Commune, remarkable for their sagacity and moderation, could only be such as were compatible with the state of a besieged town. Considering the colossal robberies committed upon the city of Paris by the great financial companies and contractors, under the protection of Haussman, the Commune would have had an incomparably better title to confiscate their property than Louis Napoleon had against the Orleans family. The Hohenzollern and the English oligarchs, who both have derived a good deal of their estates from church plunders, were, of course, greatly shocked at the Commune clearing but 8,000f out of secularization.

While the Versailles government, as soon as it had recovered some spirit and strength, used the most violent means against the Commune; while it put down the free expression of opinion all over France, even to the forbidding of meetings of delegates from the large towns; while it subjected Versailles and the rest of France to an espionage far surpassing that of the Second Empire; while it burned by its gendarme inquisitors all papers printed at Paris, and sifted all correspondence from and to Paris; while in the National Assembly the most timid attempts to put in a word for Paris were howled down in a manner unknown even to the *Chambre introuvable* of 1816; with the savage warfare of Versailles outside, and its attempts at corruption and conspiracy inside Paris – would the Commune not have shamefully betrayed its trust by affecting to keep all the decencies and appearances of liberalism as in a time of profound peace? Had the government of the Commune been akin to that of M. Thiers, there would have been no more occasion to suppress Party of Order papers at Paris than there was to suppress Communal papers at Versailles.

It was irritating indeed to the Rurals that at the very same time they declared the return to the church to be the only means of salvation for France, the infidel Commune unearthed the peculiar mysteries of the Picpus nunnery, and of the Church of St. Laurent. It was a satire upon M. Thiers that, while he showered grand crosses upon the Bonapartist generals in acknowledgment of their mastery in losing battles, signing capitulations, and turning cigarettes at Wilhelmshöhe, the Commune dismissed and arrested its generals whenever they were suspected of neglecting their duties. The expulsion from, and arrest by, the Commune of one of its members [Blanchet] who had slipped in under a false name, and had

undergone at Lyons six days' imprisonment for simple bankruptcy, was it not a deliberate insult hurled at the forger, Jules Favre, then still the foreign minister of France, still selling France to Bismarck, and still dictating his orders to that paragon government of Belgium? But indeed the Commune did not pretend to infallibility, the invariable attribute of all governments of the old stamp. It published its doings and sayings, it initiated the public into all its shortcomings.

In every revolution there intrude, at the side of its true agents, men of different stamp; some of them survivors of and devotees to past revolutions, without insight into the present movement, but preserving popular influence by their known honesty and courage, or by the sheer force of tradition; others mere brawlers who, by dint of repeating year after year the same set of stereotyped declarations against the government of the day, have sneaked into the reputation of revolutionists of the first water. After March 18, some such men did also turn up, and in some cases contrived to play pre-eminent parts. As far as their power went, they hampered the real action of the working class, exactly as men of that sort have hampered the full development of every previous revolution. They are an unavoidable evil: with time they are shaken off; but time was not allowed to the Commune.

Wonderful, indeed, was the change the Commune had wrought in Paris! No longer any trace of the meretricious Paris of the Second Empire! No longer was Paris the rendezvous of British landlords, Irish absentees, American ex-slaveholders and shoddy men, Russian ex-serfowners, and Wallachian boyards. No more corpses at the morgue, no nocturnal burglaries, scarcely any robberies; in fact, for the first time since the days of February 1848, the streets of Paris were safe, and that without any police of any kind.

“We,” said a member of the Commune, “hear no longer of assassination, theft, and personal assault; it seems indeed as if the police had dragged along with it to Versailles all its Conservative friends.”

The *cocottes* had refound the scent of their protectors – the absconding men of family, religion, and, above all, of property. In their stead, the real women of Paris showed again at the surface – heroic, noble, and devoted, like the women of antiquity. Working, thinking fighting, bleeding Paris – almost forgetful, in its incubation of a new society, of the Cannibals at its gates – radiant in the enthusiasm of its historic initiative!

Opposed to this new world at Paris, behold the old world at Versailles – that assembly of the ghouls of all defunct regimes, Legitimists and Orleanists, eager to feed upon the carcass of the nation – with a tail of antediluvian republicans, sanctioning, by their presence in the

Assembly, the slaveholders' rebellion, relying for the maintenance of their parliamentary republic upon the vanity of the senile mountebank at its head, and caricaturing 1789 by holding their ghastly meetings in the *Jeu de Paume*. There it was, this Assembly, the representative of everything dead in France, propped up to the semblance of life by nothing but the swords of the generals of Louis Bonaparte. Paris all truth, Versailles all lie; and that lie vented through the mouth of Thiers.

Thiers tells a deputation of the mayors of the Seine-et-Oise – “You may rely upon my word, which I have never broken!”

He tells the Assembly itself that “it was the most freely elected and most liberal Assembly France ever possessed”; he tells his motley soldiery that it was “the admiration of the world, and the finest army France ever possessed”; he tells the provinces that the bombardment of Paris by him was a myth: “If some cannon-shots have been fired, it was not the deed of the army of Versailles, but of some insurgents trying to make believe that they are fighting, while they dare not show their faces.” He again tells the provinces that “the artillery of Versailles does not bombard Paris, but only cannonades it”. He tells the Archbishop of Paris that the pretended executions and reprisals (!) attributed to the Versailles troops were all moonshine. He tells Paris that he was only anxious “to free it from the hideous tyrants who oppress it,” and that, in fact, the Paris of the Commune was “but a handful of criminals.”

The Paris of M. Thiers was not the real Paris of the “vile multitude,” but a phantom Paris, the Paris of the *francs-fileurs*, the Paris of the Boulevards, male and female – the rich, the capitalist, the gilded, the idle Paris, now thronging with its lackeys, its blacklegs, its literary *bonhome*, and its *cocottes* at Versailles, Saint-Denis, Rueil, and Saint-Germain; considering the civil war but an agreeable diversion, eyeing the battle going on through telescopes, counting the rounds of cannon, swearing by their own honor and that of their prostitutes, that the performance was far better got up than it used to be at the Porte St. Martin. The men who fell were really dead; the cries of the wounded were cries in good earnest; and, besides, the whole thing was so intensely historical.

This is the Paris of M. Thiers, as the emigration of Coblenz was the France of M. de Calonne.

[From Civil War in France]

The Fall of Paris

Karl Marx

The first attempt of the slaveholders' conspiracy to put down Paris by getting the Prussians to occupy it was frustrated by Bismarck's refusal.

The second attempt, that of March 18, ended in the rout of the army and the flight to Versailles of the government, which ordered the whole administration to break up and follow in its track.

By the semblance of peace negotiations with Paris, Thiers found the time to prepare for war against it. But where to find an army? The remnants of the line regiments were weak in number and unsafe in character. His urgent appeal to the provinces to succour Versailles, by their National Guards and volunteers, met with a flat refusal. Brittany alone furnished a handful of *Chouans* fighting under a white flag, every one of them wearing on his breast the heart of Jesus in white cloth, and shouting "Vive le Roi!" (Long live the King!)

Thiers was, therefore, compelled to collect, in hot haste, a motley crew, composed of sailors, marines, Pontifical Zouaves, Valentin's gendarmes, and Pietri's *sergents-de-ville* and *mouchards*. This army, however, would have been ridiculously ineffective without the instalments of imperialist war prisoners, which Bismarck granted in numbers just sufficient to keep the civil war a-going, and keep the Versailles government in abject dependence on Prussia. During the war itself, the Versailles police had to look after the Versailles army, while the gendarmes had to drag it on by exposing themselves at all posts of danger. The forts which fell were not taken, but bought. The heroism of the Federals convinced Thiers that the resistance of Paris was not to be broken by his own strategic genius and the bayonets at his disposal.

Meanwhile, his relations with the provinces became more and more difficult. Not one single address of approval came in to gladden Thiers and his Rurals. Quite the contrary. Deputations and addresses demanding, in a tone anything but respectful, conciliation with Paris on the basis of the unequivocal recognition of the republic, the acknowledgment of the Communal liberties, and the dissolution of the National Assembly, whose mandate was extinct, poured in from all sides, and in such numbers that Dufaure, Thiers' Minister of Justice, in his circular of April 23 to the public prosecutors, commanded them to treat "the cry of conciliation" as a crime! In regard, however, of the hopeless prospect held out by his campaign, Thiers resolved to shift his tactics by ordering, all over the country, municipal elections to take place on April 30, on the basis of the new municipal law dictated by himself to the National Assembly. What

with the intrigues of his prefects, what with police intimidation, he felt quite sanguine of imparting, by the verdict of the provinces, to the National Assembly that moral power it had never possessed, and of getting at last from the provinces the physical force required for the conquest of Paris.

His bandit-warfare against Paris, exalted in his own bulletins, and the attempts of his ministers at the establishment, throughout France, of a reign of terror, Thiers was from the beginning anxious to accompany with a little by-play of conciliation, which had to serve more than one purpose. It was to dupe the provinces, to inveigle the middle class elements in Paris, and above all, to afford the professed republicans in the National Assembly the opportunity of hiding their treason against Paris behind their faith in Thiers.

On March 21, when still without an army, he had declared to the Assembly: “Come what may, I will not send an army to Paris.”

On March 27, he rose again: “I have found the republic an accomplished fact, and I am firmly resolved to maintain it.”

In reality, he put down the revolution at Lyons and Marseilles in the name of the republic, while the roars of his Rurals drowned the very mention of his name at Versailles. After this exploit, he toned down the “accomplished fact” into a hypothetical fact. The Orleans princes, whom he had cautiously warned off Bordeaux, were now, in flagrant breach of the law, permitted to intrigue at Dreux. The concessions held out by Thiers in his interminable interviews with the delegates from Paris and the provinces, although constantly varied in tone and color, according to time and circumstances, did in fact never come to more than the prospective restriction of revenge to the “handful of criminals implicated in the murder of Lecomte and Clement Thomas,” on the well-understood premise that Paris and France were unreservedly to accept M. Thiers himself as the best of possible Republics, as he, in 1830, had done with Louis Philippe, and in 1849 under Louis Bonaparte’s presidency. While out of office, he made a fortune by pleading for the Paris capitalists, and made political capital by pleading against the laws he had himself originated. He now hurried through the National Assembly not only a set of repressive laws which were, after the fall of Paris, to extirpate the last remnants of republican liberty in France; he foreshadowed the fate of Paris by abridging what was for him the too slow procedure of courts-martial, and by a new-fangled, Draconic code of deportation. The Revolution of 1848, abolishing the penalty of death for political crimes, had replaced it by deportation. Louis Bonaparte did not dare, at least not in theory, to re-establish the regime of the guillotine. The Rural Assembly, not yet bold enough even to hint that the Parisians were not rebels, but assassins, had therefore to confine its prospective vengeance against Paris to Dufaure’s new code of deportation. Under all these circumstances, Thiers himself could not have gone on with his comedy of conciliation, had it not, as he intended it to do, drawn

forth shrieks of rage from the Rurals, whose ruminating mind did neither understand the play, nor its necessities of hypocrisy, tergiversation, and procrastination.

In sight of the impending municipal elections of April 30, Thiers enacted one of his great conciliation scenes on April 27. Amidst a flood of sentiment rhetoric, he exclaimed from the tribune of the Assembly:

“There exists no conspiracy against the republic but that of Paris, which compels us to shed French blood. I repeat it again and again. Let those impious arms fall from the hands which hold them, and chastisement will be arrested at once by an act of peace excluding only the small number of criminals.”

To the violent interruption of the Rurals, he replied:

“Gentlemen, tell me, I implore you, am I wrong? Do you really regret that I could have stated the truth that the criminals are only a handful? Is it not fortunate in the midst of our misfortunes that those who have been capable to shed the blood of Clement Thomas and General Lecomte are but rare exceptions?”

France, however, turned a deaf ear to what Thiers flattered himself to be a parliamentary siren’s song. Out of 700,000 municipal councillors returned by the 35,000 communes still left to France, the united Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists did not carry 8,000.

The supplementary elections which followed were still more decidedly hostile.

Thus, instead of getting from the provinces the badly-needed physical force, the National Assembly lost even its last claim to moral force, that of being the expression of the universal suffrage of the country. To complete the discomfiture, the newly-chosen municipal councils of all the cities of France openly threatened the usurping Assembly at Versailles with a counter assembly at Bordeaux.

Then the long-expected moment of decisive action had at last come for Bismarck. He peremptorily summoned Thiers to send to Frankfort plenipotentiaries for the definitive settlement of peace. In humble obedience to the call of his master, Thiers hastened to despatch his trusty Jules Favre, backed by Pouyer-Quertier. Pouyer-Quertier, an “eminent” Rouen cotton-spinner, a fervent and even servile partisan of the Second Empire, had never found any fault with it save its commercial treaty with England, prejudicial to his own shop-interest. Hardly installed at Bordeaux as Thiers’ Minister of Finance, he denounced that “unholy” treaty, hinted at its near abrogation, and had even the effrontery to try, although in vain (having counted without Bismarck), the

immediate enforcement of the old protective duties against Alsace, where, he said, no previous international treaties stood in the way. This man who considered counter-revolution as a means to put down wages at Rouen, and the surrender of French provinces as a means to bring up the price of his wares in France, was he not *the one* predestined to be picked out by Thiers as the helpmate of Jules Favre in his last and crowning treason?

On the arrival at Frankfurt of this exquisite pair of plenipotentiaries, bully Bismarck at once met them with the imperious alternative: Either the restoration of the empire or the unconditional acceptance of my own peace terms! These terms included a shortening of the intervals in which war indemnity was to be paid and the continued occupation of the Paris forts by Prussian troops until Bismarck should feel satisfied with the state of things in France; Prussia thus being recognized as the supreme arbiter in internal French politics! In return for this, he offered to let loose for the extermination of Paris the Bonapartist army, and to lend them the direct assistance of Emperor William's troops. He pledged his good faith by making payment of the first installment of the indemnity dependent on the "pacification" of Paris. Such bait was, of course, eagerly swallowed by Thiers and his plenipotentiaries. They signed the treaty of peace on May 10 and had it endorsed by the Versailles Assembly on the 18th.

In the interval between the conclusion of peace and the arrival of the Bonapartist prisoners, Thiers felt the more bound to resume his comedy of conciliation, as his republican tools stood in sore need of a pretext for blinking their eyes at the preparations for the carnage of Paris. As late as May 18, he replied to a deputation of middle-class conciliators –

“Whenever the insurgents will make up their minds for capitulation, the gates of Paris shall be flung wide open during a week for all except the murderers of Generals Clement Thomas and Lecomte.”

A few days afterwards, when violently interpellated on these promises by the Rurals, he refused to enter into any explanations; not, however, without giving them this significant hint:

“I tell you there are impatient men amongst you, men who are in too great a hurry. They must have another eight days; at the end of these eight days there will be no more danger, and the task will be proportionate to their courage and to their capacities.”

As soon as MacMahon was able to assure him, that he could shortly enter Paris, Thiers declared to the Assembly that

“he would enter Paris with the *laws* in his hands, and demand a full expiation from the wretches who had sacrificed the lives of soldiers and destroyed public monuments.”

As the moment of decision drew near, he said – to the Assembly, “I shall be pitiless!” – to Paris, that it was doomed; and to his Bonapartist bandits, that they had state licence to wreak vengeance upon Paris to their hearts’ content.

At last, when treachery had opened the gates of Paris to General Douai, on May 21, Thiers, on the 22nd, revealed to the Rurals the “goal” of his conciliation comedy, which they had so obstinately persisted in not understanding.

“I told you a few days ago that we were approaching *our goal*; today I come to tell you *the goal* is reached. The victory of order, justice, and civilization is at last won!”

So it was. The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out this fact more glaringly. Even the atrocities of the bourgeois in June 1848 vanish before the infamy of 1871. The self-sacrificing heroism with which the population of Paris – men, women, and children – fought for eight days after the entrance of the Versaillese, reflects as much the grandeur of their cause, as the infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilization, indeed, the great problem of which is how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over!

To find a parallel for the conduct of Thiers and his bloodhounds we must go back to the times of Sulla and the two Triumvirates of Rome. The same wholesale slaughter in cold blood; the same disregard, in massacre, of age and sex, the same system of torturing prisoners; the same proscriptions, but this time of a whole class; the same savage hunt after concealed leaders, lest one might escape; the same denunciations of political and private enemies; the same indifference for the butchery of entire strangers to the feud.

There is but this difference: that the Romans had no *mitrailleuses* for the despatch, in the lump, of the proscribed, and that they had not “the law in their hands,” nor on their lips the cry of “civilization.”

And after those horrors look upon the other still more hideous face of the bourgeois civilization as described by its own press!

“With stray shots,” writes the Paris correspondent of a London Tory paper, “still ringing in the distance, and unintended wounded wretches dying amid the tombstones of Pere la Chaise – with 6,000 terror-stricken insurgents wandering in an agony of despair in the labyrinth of the catacombs, and wretches hurried through the streets to be shot down in scores by the *mitrailleuse* – it is revolting to see the cafes filled with the votaries of absinthe, billiards, and dominoes; female

profligacy perambulating the boulevards, and the sound of revelry disturbing the night from the *cabinets particuliers* of fashionable restaurants.”

M. Edouard Herve writes in the *Journal de Paris*, a Versailles journal pressed by the Commune:

“The way in which the population of Paris [!] manifested its satisfaction yesterday was rather more than frivolous, and we fear it will grow worse as time progresses. Paris has now a *fete* day appearance, which is sadly out of place; and, unless we are to be called the *Parisiens de la decadence*, this sort of thing must come to an end.”

And then he quotes the passage from Tacitus:

“Yet, on the morrow of that horrible struggle, even before it was completely over, Rome – degraded and corrupt – began once more to wallow in the voluptuous slough which was destroying its body and pulling its soul – *alibi proelia et vulnera, alibi balnea popinoeque* [here fights and wounds, there baths and restaurants].”

M. Herve only forgets to say that the “population of Paris” he speaks of is but the population of the Paris of M. Thiers – the *francs-fileurs* returning in throngs from Versailles, Saint-Denis, Rueil, and Saint Germain – the Paris of the “Decline.”

In all its bloody triumphs over the self-sacrificing champions of a new and better society, that nefarious civilization, based upon the enslavement of labor, drowns the moans of its victims in a hue-and-cry of calumny, reverberated by a world-wide echo. The serene working men’s Paris of the Commune is suddenly changed into a pandemonium by the bloodhounds of “order.”

And what does this tremendous change prove to the bourgeois mind of all countries? Why, that the Commune has conspired against civilization! The Paris people die enthusiastically for the Commune in numbers unequally in any battle known to history. What does that prove? Why, that the Commune was not the people’s own government but the usurpation of a handful of criminals! The women of Paris joyfully give up their lives at the barricades and on the place of execution. What does this prove? Why, that the demon of the Commune has changed them into Megaera and Hecates!

The moderation of the Commune during the two months of undisputed sway is equalled only by the heroism of its defence.

What does that prove? Why, that for months the Commune carefully hid, under a mask of moderation and humanity, the bloodthirstiness of its fiendish instincts to be let loose in the hour of its agony!

The working men's Paris, in the act of its heroic self-holocaust, involved in its flames buildings and monuments. While tearing to pieces the living body of the proletariat, its rulers must no longer expect to return triumphantly into the intact architecture of their abodes. The government of Versailles cries, "Incendiarism!" and whispers this cue to all its agents, down to the remotest hamlet, to hunt up its enemies everywhere as suspect of professional incendiarism. The bourgeoisie of the whole world, which looks complacently upon the wholesale massacre after the battle, is convulsed by horror at the desecration of brick and mortar!

When governments give state licences to their navies to "kill, *burn*, and destroy," is that licence for incendiarism? When the British troops wantonly set fire to the Capitol at Washington and to the summer palace of the Chinese emperor, was that incendiarism? When the Prussians not for military reasons, but out of the mere spite of revenge, burned down, by the help of petroleum, towns like Chateaudun and innumerable villages, was that incendiarism? When Thiers, during six weeks, bombarded Paris, under the pretext that he wanted to set fire to those houses only in which there were people, was that incendiarism? – In war, fire is an arm as legitimate as any. Buildings held by the enemy are shelled to set them on fire. If their defenders have to retire, they themselves light the flames to prevent the attack from making use of the buildings. To be burned down has always been the inevitable fate of all buildings situated in the front of battle of all the regular armies of the world.

But in the war of the enslaved against their enslavers, the only justifiable war in history, this is by no means to hold good! The Commune used fire strictly as a means of defence. They used it to stop up to the Versailles troops those long, straight avenues which Haussman had expressly opened to artillery-fire; they used it to cover their retreat, in the same way as the Versaillese, in their advance, used their shells which destroyed at least as many buildings as the fire of the Commune. It is a matter of dispute, even now, which buildings were set fire to by the defence, and which by the attack. And the defence resorted to fire only then when the Versailles troops had already commenced their wholesale murdering of prisoners.

Besides, the Commune had, long before, given full public notice that if driven to extremities, they would bury themselves under the ruins of Paris, and make Paris a second Moscow, as the Government of National Defence, but only as a cloak for its treason, had promised to do. For this purpose Trochu had found them the petroleum. The Commune knew that its opponents cared nothing for the lives of the Paris people, but cared much for their own Paris buildings. And Thiers, on the other hand, had given them notice that he would be implacable in his vengeance. No sooner had he got his army ready on one side, and the Prussians shutting the trap on the other, than he proclaimed: "I shall be pitiless!

The expiation will be complete, and justice will be stern!” If the acts of the Paris working men were vandalism, it was the vandalism of defence in despair, not the vandalism of triumph, like that which the Christians perpetrated upon the really priceless art treasures of heathen antiquity; and even that vandalism has been justified by the historian as an unavoidable and comparatively trifling concomitant to the titanic struggle between a new society arising and an old one breaking down. It was still less the vandalism of Haussman, razing historic Paris to make place for the Paris of the sightseer!

But the execution by the Commune of the 64 hostages, with the Archbishop of Paris at their head! The bourgeoisie and its army, in June 1848, re-established a custom which had long disappeared from the practice of war – the shooting of their defenceless prisoners. This brutal custom has since been more or less strictly adhered to by the suppressors of all popular commotions in Europe and India; thus proving that it constitutes a real “progress of civilization”!

On the other hand, the Prussians in France, had re-established the practice of taking hostages – innocent men, who, with their lives, were to answer to them for the acts of others. When Thiers, as we have seen, from the very beginning of the conflict, enforced the human practice of shooting down the Communal prisoners, the Commune, to protect their lives, was obliged to resort to the Prussian practice of securing hostages. The lives of the hostages have been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versaillese. How could they be spared any longer after the carnage with which MacMahon’s praetorians celebrated their entrance into Paris?

Was even the last check upon the unscrupulous ferocity of bourgeois governments – the taking of hostages – to be made a mere sham of?

The real murderer of Archbishop Darboy is Thiers. The Commune again and again had offered to exchange the archbishop, and ever so many priests in the bargain, against the single Blanqui, then in the hands of Thiers. Theirs obstinately refused. He knew that with Blanqui he would give the Commune a head; while the archbishop would serve his purpose best in the shape of a corpse.

Thiers acted upon the precedent of Cavaignac. How, in June 1848, did not Cavaignac and his men of order raise shouts of horror by stigmatizing the insurgents as the assassins of Archbishop Affre! They knew perfectly well that the archbishop had been shot by the soldiers of order. M. Jacquemet, the archbishop’s vicar-general, present on the spot, had immediately afterwards handed them in his evidence to that effect.

All the chorus of calumny, which the Party of Order never fail, in their orgies of blood, to raise against their victims, only proves that the bourgeois of our days considers himself the legitimate successor to the baron of old, who

thought every weapon in his own hand fair against the plebeian, while in the hands of the plebeian a weapon of any kind constituted in itself a crime.

The conspiracy of the ruling class to break down the revolution by a civil war carried on under the patronage of the foreign invader – a conspiracy which we have traced from the very 4th of September down to the entrance of MacMahon’s praetorians through the gate of St.Cloud – culminated in the carnage of Paris. Bismarck gloats over the ruins of Paris, in which he saw perhaps the first installment of that general destruction of great cities he had prayed for when still a simple Rural in the Prussian *Chambre introuvable* of 1849. He gloats over the cadavers of the Paris proletariat. For him, this is not only the extermination of revolution, but the extinction of France, now decapitated in reality, and by the French government itself. With the shallowness characteristic of all successful statesmen, he sees but the surface of this tremendous historic event. Whenever before has history exhibited the spectacle of a conqueror crowning his victory by turning into, not only the gendarme, but the hired bravo of the conquered government? There existed no war between Prussia and the Commune of Paris. On the contrary, the Commune had accepted the peace preliminaries, and Prussia had announced her neutrality. Prussia was, therefore, no belligerent. She acted the part of a bravo, a cowardly bravo, because incurring no danger; a hired bravo, because stipulating beforehand the payment of her blood-money of 500 millions on the fall of Paris. And thus, at last, came out the true character of the war, ordained by Providence, as a chastisement of godless and debauched France by pious and moral Germany! And this unparalleled breach of the law of nations, even as understood by the old-world lawyers, instead of arousing the “civilized” governments of Europe to declare the felonious Prussian government, the mere tool of the St. Petersburg Cabinet, an outlaw amongst nations, only incites them to consider whether the few victims who escape the double cordon around Paris are not to be given up to the hangman of Versailles!

That, after the most tremendous war of modern times, the conquering and the conquered hosts should fraternize for the common massacre of the proletariat – this unparalleled event does indicate, not, as Bismarck thinks, the final repression of a new society up heaving, but the crumbling into dust of bourgeois society. The highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war; and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out into civil war. Class rule is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform; the national governments are *one* as against the proletariat!

After Whit-Sunday, 1871, there can be neither peace nor truce possible between the working men of France and the appropriators of their produce. The iron hand of a mercenary soldiery may keep for a time both classes tied

down in common oppression. But the battle must break out again and again in ever-growing dimensions, and there can be no doubt as to who will be the victor in the end – the appropriating few, or the immense working majority. And the French working class is only the advanced guard of the modern proletariat.

While the European governments thus testify, before Paris, to the international character of class rule, they cry down the International Working Men's Association – the international counter-organization of labor against the cosmopolitan conspiracy of capital – as the head fountain of all these disasters. Thiers denounced it as the despot of labor, pretending to be its liberator. Picard ordered that all communications between the French Internationals and those abroad be cut off; Count Jaubert, Thiers' mummified accomplice of 1835, declares it the great problem of all civilized governments to weed it out. The Rurals roar against it, and the whole European press joins the chorus. An honorable French writer [Robinet], completely foreign to our Association, speaks as follows:

“The members of the Central Committee of the National Guard, as well as the greater part of the members of the Commune, are the most active, intelligent, and energetic minds of the International Working Men's Association... men who are thoroughly honest, sincere, intelligent, devoted, pure, and fanatical in the *good* sense of the word.”

The police-tinged bourgeois mind naturally figures to itself the International Working Men's Association as acting in the manner of a secret conspiracy, its central body ordering, from time to time, explosions in different countries. Our Association is, in fact, nothing but the international bond between the most advanced working men in the various countries of the civilized world. Wherever, in whatever shape, and under whatever conditions the class struggle obtains any consistency, it is but natural that members of our Association, should stand in the foreground. The soil out of which it grows is modern society itself. It cannot be stamped out by any amount of carnage. To stamp it out, the governments would have to stamp out the despotism of capital over labor – the condition of their own parasitical existence.

Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priest will not avail to redeem them.

[From Civil War in France]

Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871

V.I. Lenin

1. WHAT MADE THE COMMUNARDS' ATTEMPT HEROIC?

IT IS well known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months before the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers that any attempt to overthrow the government would be the folly of despair. But when, in March 1871, a decisive battle was forced upon the workers and they accepted it, when the uprising had become a fact, Marx greeted the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of unfavorable auguries. Marx did not persist in the pedantic attitude of condemning an “untimely” movement as did the ill-famed Russian renegade from marxism, Plekhanov, who in November 1905 wrote encouragingly about the workers' and peasants' struggle, but after December 1905 cried, liberal fashion: “They should not have taken up arms.”

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards, who, as he expressed it, “stormed heaven”. Although the mass revolutionary movement did not achieve its aim, he regarded it as a historic experience of enormous importance, as a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, as a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programmes and arguments. Marx endeavored to analyze this experiment, to draw tactical lessons from it and re-examine his theory in the light of it.

The only “correction” Marx thought it necessary to make to the Communist Manifesto he made on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Commune.

The last preface to the new German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, signed by both its authors, is dated June 24, 1872. In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, say that the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* “has in some details become out-of-date”, and they go on to say:

“... One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes’....”

The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx's book, *The Civil War in France*.

Thus, Marx and Engels regarded one principal and fundamental lesson of

the Paris Commune as being of such enormous importance that they introduced it as an important correction into the *Communist Manifesto*.

Most characteristically, it is this important correction that has been distorted by the opportunists, and its meaning probably is not known to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine-hundredths, of the readers of the *Communist Manifesto*. We shall deal with this distortion more fully farther on, in a chapter devoted specially to distortions. Here it will be sufficient to note that the current, vulgar “interpretation” of Marx’s famous statement just quoted is that Marx here allegedly emphasizes the idea of slow development in contradistinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

As a matter of fact, the exact opposite is the case. Marx’s idea is that the working class must break up, smash the “ready-made state machinery”, and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it.

On April 12, 1871, i.e., just at the time of the Commune, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

“If you look up the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it [Marx’s italics—the original is *zerbrechen*], and this is the precondition for every real people’s revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting.” (*Neue Zeit*, Vol.XX, 1, 1901-02, p. 709.) (The letters of Marx to Kugelmann have appeared in Russian in no less than two editions, one of which I edited and supplied with a preface.)

The words, “to smash the bureaucratic-military machine”, briefly express the principal lesson of Marxism regarding the tasks of the proletariat during a revolution in relation to the state. And this is the lesson that has been not only completely ignored, but positively distorted by the prevailing, Kautskyite, “interpretation” of Marxism!

As for Marx’s reference to *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, we have quoted the relevant passage in full above.

It is interesting to note, in particular, two points in the above-quoted argument of Marx. First, he restricts his conclusion to the Continent. This was understandable in 1871, when Britain was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without a militarist clique and, to a considerable degree, without a bureaucracy. Marx therefore excluded Britain, where a revolution, even a people’s revolution, then seemed possible, and indeed was possible, *without* the precondition of destroying “ready-made state machinery”.

Today, in 1917, at the time of the first great imperialist war, this restriction made by Marx is no longer valid. Both Britain and America, the biggest and the last representatives — in the whole world — of Anglo-Saxon “liberty”, in the sense that they had no militarist cliques and bureaucracy, have completely sunk into the all-European filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions which subordinate everything to themselves, and suppress everything. Today, in Britain and America, too, “the precondition for every real people’s revolution” is the *smashing*, the *destruction* of the “ready-made state machinery” (made and brought up to the “European”, general imperialist, perfection in those countries in the years 1914-17).

Secondly, particular attention should be paid to Marx’s extremely profound remark that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is “the precondition for every real *people’s* revolution”. This idea of a “people’s revolution seems strange coming from Marx, so that the Russian Plekhanovites and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve who wish to be regarded as Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a “slip of the pen” on Marx’s part. They have reduced Marxism to such a state of wretchedly liberal distortion that nothing exists for them beyond the antithesis between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution, and even this antithesis they interpret in an utterly lifeless way.

If we take the revolutions of the 20th century as examples we shall, of course, have to admit that the Portuguese and the Turkish revolutions are both bourgeois revolutions. Neither of them, however, is a “people’s” revolution, since in neither does the mass of the people, their vast majority, come out actively, independently, with their own economic and political demands to any noticeable degree. By contrast, although the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905-07 displayed no such “brilliant” successes as at time fell to the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions, it was undoubtedly a “real people’s” revolution, since the mass of the people, their majority, the very lowest social groups, crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and stamped on the entire course of the revolution the imprint of *their* own demands, *their* attempt to build in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed.

In Europe, in 1871, the proletariat did not constitute the majority of the people in any country on the Continent. A “people’s” revolution, one actually sweeping the majority into its stream, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasants. These two classes then constituted the “people”. These two classes are united by the fact that the “bureaucratic-military state machine” oppresses, crushes, exploits them. To *smash* this machine, to *break it up*, is truly in the interest of the “people”, of their majority, of the workers and most of the peasants, is “the precondition” for a free alliance of the poor peasant and the proletarians, whereas without such an alliance democracy is unstable and socialist transformation is impossible.

As is well known, the Paris Commune was actually working its way toward such an alliance, although it did not reach its goal owing to a number of circumstances, internal and external.

Consequently, in speaking of a “real people’s revolution”, Marx, without in the least discounting the special features of the petty bourgeois (he spoke a great deal about them and often), took strict account of the actual balance of class forces in most of the continental countries of Europe in 1871. On the other hand, he stated that the “smashing” of the state machine was required by the interests of both the workers and the peasants, that it united them, that it placed before them the common task of removing the “parasite” and of replacing it by something new.

By what exactly?

2. WHAT IS TO REPLACE THE SMASHED STATE MACHINE?

IN 1847, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx’s answer to this question was as yet a purely abstract one; to be exact, it was an answer that indicated he tasks, but not the ways of accomplishing them. The answer given in the *Communist Manifesto* was that this machine was to be replaced by “the proletariat organized as the ruling class”, by the “winning of the battle of democracy”.

Marx did not indulge in utopias; he expected the *experience* of the mass movement to provide the reply to the question as to the specific forms this organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class would assume and as to the exact manner in which this organisation would be combined with the most complete, most consistent “winning of the battle of democracy.”

Marx subjected the experience of the Commune, meagre as it was, to the most careful analysis in [The Civil War in France](#). Let us quote the most important passages of this work. [All the following quotes in this Chapter, with one exception, are so cited - Ed.]

Originating from the Middle Ages, there developed in the 19th century “the centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature.” With the development of class antagonisms between capital and labor, “state power assumed more and more the character of a public force organized for the suppression of the working class, of a machine of class rule. After every revolution, which marks an advance in the class struggle, the purely coercive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief.” After the revolution of 1848-49, state power became “the national war instruments of capital against labor”. The Second Empire consolidated this.

“The direct antithesis to the empire was the Commune.” It was the

“specific form” of “a republic that was not only to remove the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself.”

What was this “specific” form of the proletarian, socialist republic? What was the state it began to create?

“The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.”

This demand now figures in the programme of every party calling itself socialist. The real worth of their programme, however, is best shown by the behavior of our Social-Revolutionists and mensheviks, who, right after the revolution of February 27, refused to carry out this demand!

“The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class.... The police, which until then had been the instrument of the Government, was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen’s wages*. The privileges and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.... Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the instruments of physical force of the old government, the Commune proceeded at once to break the instrument of spiritual suppression, the power of the priests.... The judicial functionaries lost that sham independence... they were thenceforward to be elective, responsible, and revocable.”

The Commune, therefore, appears to have replaced the smashed state machine “only” by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of “quantity being transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush their resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. The organ of suppression, however, is here the majority of the population, and not a minority,

as was always the case under slavery, serfdom, and wage slavery. And since the majority of people itself suppresses its oppressors, a ‘special force’ for suppression is no longer necessary! In this sense, the state begins to wither away. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfil all these functions, and the more the functions of state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power.

In this connection, the following measures of the Commune, emphasized by Marx, are particularly noteworthy: the abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges to officials, the reduction of the remuneration of all servants of the state to the level of “workmen’s wages”. This shows more clearly than anything else the turn from bourgeois to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to that of the oppressed classes, from the state as a “special force” for the suppression of a particular class to the suppression of the oppressors by the general force of the majority of the people—the workers and the peasants. And it is on this particularly striking point, perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the ideas of Marx have been most completely ignored! In popular commentaries, the number of which is legion, this is not mentioned. The thing done is to keep silent about it as if it were a piece of old-fashioned “naivete”, just as Christians, after their religion had been given the status of state religion, “forgot” the “naivete” of primitive Christianity with its democratic revolutionary spirit.

The reduction of the remuneration of high state officials seem “simply” a demand of naive, primitive democracy. One of the “founders” of modern opportunism, the ex-Social-Democrat Eduard Bernstein, has more than once repeated the vulgar bourgeois jeers at “primitive” democracy. Like all opportunists, and like the present Kautskyites, he did not understand at all that, first of all, the transition from capitalism to socialism is impossible without a certain “reversion” to “primitive” democracy (for how else can the majority, and then the whole population without exception, proceed to discharge state functions?); and that, secondly, “primitive democracy” based on capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same as primitive democracy in prehistoric or precapitalist times. Capitalist culture has created large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and on this basis the great majority of the functions of the old “state power” have become so simplified and can be reduced to such exceedingly simple operations of registration, filing, and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be performed for ordinary “workmen’s wages”, and that these functions can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of “official grandeur”.

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time,

their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary “workmen’s wages” — these simple and “self-evident” democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism. These measures concern the reorganization of the state, the purely political reorganization of society; but, of course, they acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the “expropriation of the expropriators” either bring accomplished or in preparation, i.e., with the transformation of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership.

“The Commune,” Marx wrote, “made the catchword of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by abolishing the two greatest sources of expenditure—the army and the officialdom.”

From the peasants, as from other sections of the petty bourgeoisie, only an insignificant few “rise to the top”, “get on in the world” in the bourgeois sense, i.e., become either ell-to-do, bourgeois, or officials in secure and privileged positions. In every capitalist country where there are peasants (as there are in most capitalist countries), the vast majority of them are oppressed by the government and long for its overthrow, long for “cheap” government. This can be achieved only by the proletariat; and by achieving it, the proletariat at the same time takes a step towards the socialist reorganization of the state.

3. ABOLITION OF PARLIAMENTARISM

“The Commune,” Marx wrote, “was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time....

“Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress [ver- and zertreten] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business.”

Owing to the prevalence of social-chauvinism and opportunism, this remarkable criticism of parliamentarism, made in 1871, also belongs now to the “forgotten words” of Marxism. The professional Cabinet Ministers and parliamentarians, the traitors to the proletariat and the “practical” socialists of our day, have left all criticism of parliamentarism to the anarchists, and, on this wonderfully reasonable ground, they denounce all criticism of parliamentarism as “anarchism”!! It is not surprising that the proletariat of the “advanced” parliamentary countries, disgusted with such “socialists” as the Scheidemanns, Davids, Legiens, Sembats, Renaudels, Hendersons, Vanderveldes, Staunings, Brantings, Bissolatis, and Co., has been with increasing frequency giving its sympathies to anarcho-syndicalism, in spite of the fact that the latter is merely the twin brother of opportunism.

For Marx, however, revolutionary dialectics was never the empty fashionable phrase, the toy rattle, which Plekhanov, Kautsky and others have made of it. Marx knew how to break with anarchism ruthlessly for its inability to make use even of the “pigsty” of bourgeois parliamentarism, especially when the situation was obviously not revolutionary; but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarism to genuinely revolutionary proletarian criticism.

To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.

But if we deal with the question of the state, and if we consider parliamentarism as one of the institutions of the state, from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in this field, what is the way out of parliamentarism? How can it be dispensed with?

Once again, we must say: the lessons of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, have been so completely forgotten that the present-day “Social-Democrat” (i.e., present-day traitor to socialism) really cannot understand any criticism of parliamentarism other than anarchist or reactionary criticism.

The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into “working” bodies. “The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time.”

“A working, not a parliamentary body”—this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarian country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth—in these countries the real business of “state” is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries, and General Staffs. parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the “common people”. This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois-democratic republic, all these sins of parliamentarism came out at once, even before it managed to set up a real parliament. The heroes of rotten philistinism, such as the skobelevs and tseretelis, the Chernovs and Avksentyevs, have even succeeded in polluting the Soviets after the fashion of the most disgusting bourgeois parliamentarism, in converting them into mere talking shops. In the Soviets, the “socialist” Ministers are fooling the credulous rustics with phrase-mongering and resolutions. In the government itself a sort of permanent shuffle is going on in order that, on the one hand, as many Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks as possible may in turn get near the “pie”, the lucrative and honorable posts, and that, on the other hand, the “attention” of the people may be “engaged”. meanwhile the chancelleries and army staffs “do” the business of “state”.

Dyelo Naroda, the organ of the ruling Socialist-Revolutionary Party, recently admitted in a leading article—with the matchless frankness of people of “good society”, in which “all” are engaged in political prostitution - that even in the ministries headed by the “socialists” (save the mark!), the whole bureaucratic apparatus is in fact unchanged, is working in the old way and quite “freely” sabotaging revolutionary measures! Even without this admission, does not the actual history of the participation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the government prove this? It is noteworthy, however, that in the ministerial company of the Cadets, the Chernovs, Rusanovs, Zenzinovs, and other editors of *Dyelo Naroda* have so completely lost all sense of shame as to brazenly assert, as if it were a mere bagatelle, that in “their” ministries everything is unchanged!! Revolutionary-democratic phrases to gull the rural Simple Simons, and bureaucracy and red tape to “gladden the hearts” of the capitalists—that is the essence of the “honest” coalition.

The Commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labor between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere “election” cry for catching workers’ votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and also the Scheidemanns and Legiens, the Smlblats and Vanderveldes.

It is extremely instructive to note that, in speaking of the function of those officials who are necessary for the Commune and for proletarian democracy, Marx compares them to the workers of “every other employer”, that is, of the ordinary capitalist enterprise, with its “workers, foremen, and accountants”.

There is no trace of utopianism in Marx, in the sense that he made up or invented a “new” society. No, he studied the birth of the new society out of the old, and the forms of transition from the latter to the former, as a mass proletarian movement and tried to draw practical lessons from it. He “Learned” from the Commune, just as all the great revolutionary thinkers learned unhesitatingly from the experience of great movements of the oppressed classes, and never addressed them with pedantic “homilies” (such as Plekhanov’s: “They should not have taken up arms” or Tsereteli’s: “A class must limit itself”).

Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of

the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy—this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

Capitalism simplifies the functions of “state” administration; it makes it possible to cast “bossing” aside and to confine the whole matter to the organization of the proletarians (as the ruling class), which will hire “workers, foremen and accountants” in the name of the whole of society.

We are not utopians, we do not “dream” of dispensing at once with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based upon incomprehension of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control, and “foremen and accountants”.

The subordination, however, must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and working people, i.e., to the proletariat. A beginning can and must be made at once, overnight, to replace the specific “bossing” of state officials by the simple functions of “foremen and accountants”, functions which are already fully within the ability of the average town dweller and can well be performed for “workmen’s wages”.

We, the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed up by the state power of the armed workers. We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid “foremen and accountants” (of course, with the aid of technicians of all sorts, types and degrees). This is our proletarian task, this is what we can and must start with in accomplishing the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning, on the basis of large-scale production, will of itself lead to the gradual “withering away” of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order—an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery—an order under which the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the special functions of a special section of the population.

A witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system. This is very true. At the present the postal service is a business organized on the lines of state-capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the “common” people,

who are overworked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly-equipped mechanism, freed from the “parasite”, a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all “state” officials in general, workmen’s wages. Here is a concrete, practical task which can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfilment will rid the working people of exploitation, a task which takes account of what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in building up the state).

To organize the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than “a workman’s wage”, all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat—that is our immediate aim. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the laboring classes of the bourgeoisie’s prostitution of these institutions.

4. ORGANISATION OF NATIONAL UNITY

“In a brief sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states explicitly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest village....” The communes were to elect the “National Delegation” in Paris.

“... The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as had been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials.

“... National unity was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, organized by the communal constitution; it was to become a reality by the destruction of state power which posed as the embodiment of that unity yet wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation, on whose body it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society.”

The extent to which the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy have failed—perhaps it would be more true to say, have refused—to understand

these observations of Marx is best shown by that book of Herostratean fame of the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social-Democrats*. It is in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote that “as far as its political content”, this programme “displays, in all its essential features, the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon.... In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the ‘petty-bourgeois’ Proudhon [Bernstein places the word “petty-bourgeois” in inverted commas, to make it sound ironical] on these points, their lines of reasoning run as close as could be.” Of course, Bernstein continues, the importance of the municipalities is growing, but “it seems doubtful to me whether the first job of democracy would be such a dissolution [Auflosung] of the modern states and such a complete transformation [Umwandlung] of their organization as is visualized by Marx and Proudhon (the formation of a National Assembly from delegates of the provincial or district assemblies, which, in their turn, would consist of delegates from the communes), so that consequently the previous mode of national representation would disappear.” (Bernstein, *Premises*, German edition, 1899, pp.134 and 136)

To confuse Marx’s view on the “destruction of state power, a parasitic excrescence”, with Proudhon’s federalism is positively monstrous! But it is no accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx does not speak here at all about federalism as opposed to centralism, but about smashing the old, bourgeois state machine which exists in all bourgeois countries.

The only thing that does occur to the opportunist is what he sees around him, in an environment of petty-bourgeois philistinism and “reformists” stagnation, namely, only “municipalities”! The opportunist has even grown out of the habit of thinking about proletarian revolution.

It is ridiculous. But the remarkable thing is that nobody argued with Bernstein on this point. Bernstein has been refuted by many, especially by Plekhanov in Russian literature and by Kautsky in European literature, but neither of them has said anything about this distortion of Marx by Bernstein.

The opportunist has so much forgotten how to think in a revolutionary way and to dwell on revolution that he attributes “federalism” to Marx, whom he confuses with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. As for Kautsky and Plekhanov, who claim to be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the theory of revolutionary Marxism, they are silent on this point! Here is one of the roots of the extreme vulgarization of the views on the difference between Marxism and anarchism, which is characteristic of both the Kautskyites and the opportunists, and which we shall discuss again later.

There is not a trace of federalism in Marx’s above-quoted observation on the experience of the Commune. Marx agreed with Proudhon on the very point

that the opportunist Bernstein did not see. Marx disagreed with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein found a similarity between them.

Marx agreed with Proudhon in that they both stood for the “smashing” of the modern state machine. Neither the opportunists nor the Kautskyites wish to see the similarity of views on this point between Marxism and anarchism (both Proudhon and Bakunin) because this is where they have departed from Marxism.

Marx disagreed both with Proudhon and Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from the petty-bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure whatever from centralism in his observations just quoted. Only those who are imbued with the philistine “superstitious belief” in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the destruction of centralism!

Now if the proletariat and the poor peasants take state power into their own hands, organize themselves quite freely in communes, and unite the action of all the communes in striking at capital, in crushing the resistance of the capitalists, and in transferring the privately-owned railways, factories, land and so on to the entire nation, to the whole of society, won't that be centralism? Won't that be the most consistent democratic centralism and, moreover, proletarian centralism?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive of the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes, for the sole purpose of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like all philistines, Bernstein pictures centralism as something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above, and solely by the bureaucracy and military clique.

As though foreseeing that his views might be distorted, Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx purposely used the words: “National unity was... to be organized”, so as to oppose conscious, democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism.

But there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the very thing the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy do not want to hear about is the destruction of state power, the amputation of the parasitic excrescence.

5. ABOLITION OF THE PARASITE STATE

We have already quoted Marx's words on the subject, and we must now supplement them.

“It is generally the fate of new historical creations,” he wrote, “to be

mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks [bricht, smashes] the modern state power, has been regarded as a revival of the medieval communes... as a federation of small states (as Montesquieu and the Girondins visualized it)... as an exaggerated form of the old struggle against overcentralization....

“... The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by that parasitic excrescence, the ‘state’, feeding upon and hampering the free movement of society. By this one act it would have initiated the regeneration of France....

“... The Communal Constitution would have brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the town working men, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local self-government, but no longer as a counterpoise to state power, now become superfluous.”

“Breaking state power”, which as a “parasitic excrescence”; its “amputation”, its “smashing”; “state power, now become superfluous”—these are the expressions Marx used in regard to the state when appraising and analyzing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now one has to engage in excavations, as it were, in order to bring undistorted Marxism to the knowledge of the mass of the people. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx lived through were forgotten just when the time for the next great proletarian revolution has arrived.

“... The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which expressed themselves in it show that it was a thoroughly flexible political form, while all previous forms of government had been essentially repressive. Its true secret was this: it was essentially a working-class government, the result of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which the economic emancipation of labor could be accomplished....

“Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion....”

The utopians busied themselves with “discovering” political forms under which the socialist transformation of society was to take place. The anarchists dismissed the question of political forms altogether. The opportunists of present-

day Social-Democracy accepted the bourgeois political forms of the parliamentary democratic state as the limit which should not be overstepped; they battered their foreheads praying before this “model”, and denounced as anarchism every desire to break these forms.

Marx deduced from the whole history of socialism and the political struggle that the state was bound to disappear, and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from state to non-state) would be the “proletariat organized as the ruling class”. Marx, however, did not set out to discover the political forms of this future stage. He limited himself to carefully observing French history, to analyzing it, and to drawing the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led, namely, that matters were moving towards destruction of the bourgeois state machine.

And when the mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat burst forth, Marx, in spite of its failure, in spite of its short life and patent weakness, began to study the forms it had discovered.

The Commune is the form “at last discovered” by the proletarian revolution, under which the economic emancipation of labor can take place.

The Commune is the first attempt by a proletarian revolution to smash the bourgeois state machine; and it is the political form “at last discovered”, by which the smashed state machine can and must be replaced.

We shall see further on that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and confirm Marx’s brilliant historical analysis.

[Third Chapter of The State and Revolution]

The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

V.I. Lenin

MARX explains this question most thoroughly in his Critique of the Gotha Programme (letter to Bracke, May 5, 1875, which was not published until 1891 when it was printed in *Neue Zeit*, vol. IX, 1, and which has appeared in Russian in a special edition). The polemical part of this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.

1. PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION BY MARX

FROM a superficial comparison of Marx's letter to Bracke of May 5, 1875, with Engels' letter to Bebel of March 28, 1875, which we examined above, it might appear that Marx was much more of a "champion of the state" than Engels, and that the difference of opinion between the two writers on the question of the state was very considerable.

Engels suggested to Bebel that all chatter about the state be dropped altogether, that the word "state" be eliminated from the programme altogether and the word "community" substituted for it. Engels even declared that the Commune was long a state in the proper sense of the word. Yet Marx even spoke of the "future state in communist society", i.e., he would seem to recognize the need for the state even under communism.

But such a view would be fundamentally wrong. A closer examination shows that Marx's and Engels' views on the state and its withering away were completely identical, and that Marx's expression quoted above refers to the state in the process of withering away.

Clearly, there can be no question of specifying the moment of the future "withering away", the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the fact that they dealt with different subjects and pursued different aims. Engels set out to show Bebel graphically, sharply, and in broad outline the utter absurdity of the current prejudices concerning the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx

only touched upon this question in passing, being interested in another subject, namely, the development of communist society.

The whole theory of Marx is the application of the theory of development—in its most consistent, complete, considered and pithy form—to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the problem of applying this theory both to the forthcoming collapse of capitalism and to the future development of future communism.

On the basis of what facts, then, can the question of the future development of future communism be dealt with?

On the basis of the fact that it has its origin in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism gave birth. There is no trace of an attempt on Marx's part to make up a utopia, to indulge in idle guess-work about what cannot be known. Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he knew that it had originated in such and such a way and was changing in such and such a definite direction.

To begin with, Marx brushed aside the confusion the Gotha Programme brought into the question of the relationship between state and society. He wrote:

“‘Present-day society’ is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, being more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the ‘present-day state’ changes with a country’s frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, and different in England from what it is in the United States. ‘The present-day state’ is, therefore, a fiction.

“Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilized countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of the ‘present-day state’, in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off.

“The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state.”

After thus ridiculing all talk about a “people’s state”, Marx formulated the question and gave warning, as it were, that those seeking a scientific answer to it should use only firmly-established scientific data.

The first fact that has been established most accurately by the whole theory of development, by science as a whole—a fact that was ignored by the utopians, and is ignored by the present-day opportunists, who are afraid of the socialist revolution—is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage, or a special phase, of transition from capitalism to communism.

2. THE TRANSITION FROM CAPITALISM TO COMMUNISM

MARX continued:

“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data concerning the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Previously the question was put as follows: to achieve its emancipation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, win political power and establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the question is put somewhat differently: the transition from capitalist society—which is developing towards communism—to communist society is impossible without a “political transition period”, and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?

We have seen that the Communist Manifesto simply places side by side the two concepts: “to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class” and “to win the battle of democracy”. On the basis of all that has been said above, it is possible to determine more precisely how democracy changes in the transition from capitalism to communism.

In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek

republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that “they cannot be bothered with democracy”, “cannot be bothered with politics”; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.

The correctness of this statement is perhaps most clearly confirmed by Germany, because constitutional legality steadily endured there for a remarkably long time—nearly half a century (1871-1914)—and during this period the Social-Democrats were able to achieve far more than in other countries in the way of “utilizing legality”, and organized a larger proportion of the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world.

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage slaves that has so far been recorded in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party - out of 15,000,000 wage-workers! Three million organized in trade unions—out of 15,000,000!

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the “petty”—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualifications, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “paupers”!), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc.,—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of 10, if not 99 out of 100, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Marx grasped this essence of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analyzing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!

But from this capitalist democracy—that is inevitably narrow and stealthily pushes aside the poor, and is therefore hypocritical and false through and through—forward development does not proceed simply, directly and smoothly, towards “greater and greater democracy”, as the liberal professors and petty-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, forward development, i.e., development towards communism, proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and cannot do otherwise, for the resistance of the capitalist exploiters cannot be broken by anyone else or in any other way.

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that “the proletariat needs the state, not in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist”.

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the transition from capitalism to communism.

Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), only then “the state... ceases to exist”, and “it becomes possible to speak of freedom”. Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realized, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to wither away, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities, and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state.

The expression “the state withers away” is very well-chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for we see around us on millions of occasions how readily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolt, and creates the need for suppression.

And so in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create

democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, of the minority. Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the sooner it will become unnecessary and wither away of its own accord.

In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, what is more, of the majority by the minority. Naturally, to be successful, such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the utmost ferocity and savagery in the matter of suppressing, it calls for seas of blood, through which mankind is actually wading its way in slavery, serfdom and wage labor.

Furthermore, during the transition from capitalism to communism suppression is still necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the “state”, is still necessary, but this is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of yesterday is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage-laborers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machine of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple “machine”, almost without a “machine”, without a special apparatus, by the simple organization of the armed people (such as the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

Lastly, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is nobody to be suppressed—”nobody” in the sense of a class, of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to stop such excesses. In the first place, however, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression, is needed for this: this will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consist in the violation of the rules of social intercourse, is the exploitation of the people, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to “wither away”. We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we do know they will wither away. With their withering away the state will also wither away.

Without building utopias, Marx defined more fully what can be defined now regarding this future, namely, the differences between the lower and higher phases (levels, stages) of communist society.

3. THE FIRST PHASE OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY

IN THE *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx goes into detail to disprove Lassalle's idea that under socialism the worker will receive the "undiminished" or "full product of his labor". Marx shows that from the whole of the social labor of society there must be deducted a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, a fund for the replacement of the "wear and tear" of machinery, and so on. Then, from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for administrative expenses, for schools, hospitals, old people's homes, and so on.

Instead of Lassalle's hazy, obscure, general phrase ("the full product of his labor to the worker"), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs. Marx proceeds to make a concrete analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism, and says:

"What we have to deal with here [in analyzing the programme of the workers' party] is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it comes."

It is this communist society, which has just emerged into the light of day out of the womb of capitalism and which is in every respect stamped with the birthmarks of the old society, that Marx terms the "first", or lower, phase of communist society.

The means of production are no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of the socially-necessary work, receives a certificate from society to the effect that he has done a certain amount of work. And with this certificate he receives from the public store of consumer goods a corresponding quantity of products. After a deduction is made of the amount of labor which goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given to it.

"Equality" apparently reigns supreme.

But when Lassalle, having in view such a social order (usually called socialism, but termed by Marx the first phase of communism), says that this is "equitable distribution", that this is "the equal right of all to an equal product of labor", Lassalle is mistaken and Marx exposes the mistake.

“Hence, the equal right,” says Marx, in this case still certainly conforms to “bourgeois law”, which, like all law, implies inequality. All law is an application of an equal measure to different people who in fact are not alike, are not equal to one another. That is why the “equal right” is violation of equality and an injustice. In fact, everyone, having performed as much social labor as another, receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).

But people are not alike: one is strong, another is weak; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has less, and so on. And the conclusion Marx draws is:

“... With an equal performance of labor, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, the right instead of being equal would have to be unequal.”

The first phase of communism, therefore, cannot yet provide justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still persist, but the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible because it will be impossible to seize the means of production—the factories, machines, land, etc.—and make them private property. In smashing Lassalle’s petty-bourgeois, vague phrases about “equality” and “justice” in general, Marx shows the course of development of communist society, which is compelled to abolish at first only the “injustice” of the means of production seized by individuals, and which is unable at once to eliminate the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of consumer goods “according to the amount of labor performed” (and not according to needs).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors and “our” Tugan, constantly reproach the socialists with forgetting the inequality of people and with “dreaming” of eliminating this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of the bourgeois ideologists.

Marx not only most scrupulously takes account of the inevitable inequality of men, but he also takes into account the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole society (commonly called “socialism”) does not remove the defects of distribution and the inequality of “bourgeois laws” which continues to prevail so long as products are divided “according to the amount of labor performed”. Continuing, Marx says:

“But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged, after prolonged birth pangs, from capitalist society. Law can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.”

And so, in the first phase of communist society (usually called socialism)

“bourgeois law” is not abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. “Bourgeois law” recognizes them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into common property. To that extent—and to that extent alone—“bourgeois law” disappears.

However, it persists as far as its other part is concerned; it persists in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and the allotment of labor among the members of society. The socialist principle, “He who does not work shall not eat”, is already realized; the other socialist principle, “An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labor”, is also already realized. But this is not yet communism, and it does not yet abolish “bourgeois law”, which gives unequal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labor, equal amounts of products.

This is a “defect”, says Marx, but it is unavoidable in the first phase of communism; for if we are not to indulge in utopianism, we must not think that having overthrown capitalism people will at once learn to work for society without any rules of law. Besides, the abolition of capitalism does not immediately create the economic prerequisites for such a change.

Now, there are no other rules than those of “bourgeois law”. To this extent, therefore, there still remains the need for a state, which, while safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, would safeguard equality in labor and in the distribution of products.

The state withers away insofar as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, no class can be suppressed.

But the state has not yet completely withered away, since the still remains the safeguarding of “bourgeois law”, which sanctifies actual inequality. For the state to wither away completely, complete communism is necessary.

4. THE HIGHER PHASE OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY

Marx continues:

“In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and with it also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished, after labor has become not only a livelihood but life’s prime want, after the productive forces have increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois law be left behind in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!”

Only now can we fully appreciate the correctness of Engels' remarks mercilessly ridiculing the absurdity of combining the words "freedom" and "state". So long as the state exists there is no freedom. When there is freedom, there will be no state.

The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high state of development of communism at which the antithesis between mental and physical labor disappears, at which there consequently disappears one of the principal sources of modern social inequality—a source, moreover, which cannot on any account be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

This expropriation will make it possible for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already retarding this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labor, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labor, of transforming labor into "life's prime want"—we do not and cannot know.

That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasizing the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the higher phase of communism, and leaving the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away quite open, because there is no material for answering these questions.

The state will be able to wither away completely when society adopts the rule: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs", i.e., when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labor has become so productive that they will voluntarily work according to their ability. "The narrow horizon of bourgeois law", which compels one to calculate with the heartlessness of a Shylock whether one has not worked half an hour more than anybody else—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for society, in distributing the products, to regulate the quantity to be received by each; each will take freely "according to his needs".

From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare that such a social order is "sheer utopia" and to sneer at the socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society, without any control over the labor of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, cars, pianos, etc. Even to this day, most bourgeois

“savants” confine themselves to sneering in this way, thereby betraying both their ignorance and their selfish defence of capitalism.

Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any socialist to “promise” that the higher phase of the development of communism will arrive; as for the greatest socialists’ forecast that it will arrive, it presupposes not the present ordinary run of people, who, like the seminary students in Pomyalovsky’s stories,¹² are capable of damaging the stocks of public wealth “just for fun”, and of demanding the impossible.

Until the “higher” phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the strictest control by society and by the state over the measure of labor and the measure of consumption; but this control must start with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers’ control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of armed workers.

The selfish defence of capitalism by the bourgeois ideologists (and their hangers-on, like the Tseretelis, Chernovs, and Co.) consists in that they substitute arguing and talk about the distant future for the vital and burning question of present-day politics, namely, the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of all citizens into workers and other employees of one huge “syndicate”—the whole state—and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to a genuinely democratic state, the state of the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.

In fact, when a learned professor, followed by the philistine, followed in turn by the Tseretelis and Chernovs, talks of wild utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of “introducing” socialism, it is the higher stage, or phase, of communism he has in mind, which no one has ever promised or even thought to “introduce”, because, generally speaking, it cannot be “introduced”.

And this brings us to the question of the scientific distinction between socialism and communism which Engels touched on in his above-quoted argument about the incorrectness of the name “Social-Democrat”. Politically, the distinction between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of communism will in time, probably, be tremendous. But it would be ridiculous to recognize this distinction now, under capitalism, and only individual anarchists, perhaps, could invest it with primary importance (if there still are people among the anarchists who have learned nothing from the “Plekhanov” conversion of the Kropotkins, of Grave, Corneliseen, and other “stars” of anarchism into social-chauvinists or “anarcho-trenchists”, as Ghe, one of the few anarchists who have still preserved a sense of humor and a conscience, has put it).

But the scientific distinction between socialism and communism is clear.

What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the “first”, or lower, phase of communist society. Insofar as the means of production becomes common property, the word “communism” is also applicable here, providing we do not forget that this is not complete communism. The great significance of Marx’s explanations is that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of development, and regards communism as something which develops out of capitalism. Instead of scholastically invented, “concocted” definitions and fruitless disputes over words (What is socialism? What is communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of the economic maturity of communism.

In its first phase, or first stage, communism cannot as yet be fully mature economically and entirely free from traditions or vestiges of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains “the narrow horizon of bourgeois law”. Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of consumer goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the rules of law.

It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!

This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical conundrum of which Marxism is often accused by people who have not taken the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content.

But in fact, remnants of the old, surviving in the new, confront us in life at every step, both in nature and in society. And Marx did not arbitrarily insert a scrap of “bourgeois” law into communism, but indicated what is economically and politically inevitable in a society emerging out of the womb of capitalism.

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the proletariat’s struggle for equality and of equality as a slogan will be clear if we correctly interpret it as meaning the abolition of classes. But democracy means only formal equality. And as soon as equality is achieved for all members of society in relation to ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labor and wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of advancing further, from formal equality to actual equality, i.e., to the operation of the rule “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”. By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this supreme aim we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realize how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of socialism as something lifeless, rigid, fixed once and for all, whereas in reality only socialism will be the beginning of a rapid, genuine, truly mass forward movement, embracing first the majority and then the whole of the population, in all spheres of public and private life.

Democracy is of enormous importance to the working class in its struggle against the capitalists for its emancipation. But democracy is by no means a boundary not to be overstepped; it is only one of the stages on the road from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism.

Democracy is a form of the state, it represents, on the one hand, the organized, systematic use of force against persons; but, on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state. This, in turn, results in the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the class that wages a revolutionary struggle against capitalism—the proletariat, and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican-bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy and to substitute for them a more democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population.

Here “quantity turns into quality”: such a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganization. If really all take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold. The development of capitalism, in turn, creates the preconditions that enable really “all” to take part in the administration of the state. Some of these preconditions are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the “training and disciplining” of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.

Given these economic preconditions, it is quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to replace them in the control over production and distribution, in the work of keeping account of labor and products, by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population. (The question of control and accounting should not be confused with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists, and so on. These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers.)

Accounting and control—that is *mainly* what is needed for the “smooth working”, for the proper functioning, of the *first phase* of communist society. *All* citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. *All* citizens becomes employees and workers of a *single* countrywide state “syndicate”. All that is required is that they should work equally, do their proper share of work, and get equal pay; the accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to the utmost and

reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts.

When the *majority* of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and exercise such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, and popular; and there will be no getting away from it, there will be “nowhere to go”.

The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labor and pay.

But this “factory” discipline, which the proletariat, after defeating the capitalists, after overthrowing the exploiters, will extend to the whole of society, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is only a necessary *step* for thoroughly cleansing society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation, *and for further progress*.

From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands, have organized control over the insignificant capitalist minority, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits and over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism—from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary. The more democratic the “state” which consists of the armed workers, and which is “no longer a state in the proper sense of the word”, the more rapidly *every form* of state begins to wither away.

For when *all* have learned to administer and actually to independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the parasites, the sons of the wealthy, the swindlers and other “guardians of capitalist traditions”, the escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not sentimental intellectuals, and they scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of the community will very soon become a *habit*.

Then the door will be thrown wide open for the transition from the first phase of communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state.

[Fifth Chapter of The State and Revolution]

Lessons of the Commune

V.I. Lenin

AFTER the coup d'état, which marked the end of the revolution of 1848, France fell under the yoke of the Napoleonic regime for a period of 18 years. This regime brought upon the country not only economic ruin but national humiliation. In rising against the old regime the proletariat undertook two tasks—one of them national and the other of a class character—the liberation of France from the German invasion and the socialist emancipation of the workers from capitalism. This union of two tasks forms a unique feature of the Commune.

The bourgeoisie had formed a “government of national defence” and the proletariat had to fight for national independence under its leadership. Actually, it was a government of “national betrayal” which saw its mission in fighting the Paris proletariat. But the proletariat, blinded by patriotic illusions, did not perceive this. The patriotic idea had its origin in the Great Revolution of the eighteenth century; it swayed the minds of the socialists of the Commune; and Blanqui, for example, undoubtedly a revolutionary and an ardent supporter of socialism, could find no better title for his newspaper than the bourgeois cry: “*The country is in danger!*”

Combining contradictory tasks—patriotism and socialism—was the fatal mistake of the French socialists. In the Manifesto of the International, issued in September 1870, Marx had warned the French proletariat against being misled by a false national idea²; the Great Revolution, class antagonisms had sharpened, and whereas at that time the struggle against the whole of European reaction united the entire revolutionary nation, now the proletariat could no longer combine its interests with the interests of other classes hostile to it; let the bourgeoisie bear the responsibility for the national humiliation—the task of the proletariat was to fight for the socialist emancipation of labour from the yoke of the bourgeoisie.

And indeed the true nature of bourgeois “patriotism” was not long in revealing itself. Having concluded an ignominious peace with the Prussians, the Versailles government proceeded to its immediate task—it launched an attack to wrest the arms that terrified it from the hands of the Paris proletariat. The workers replied by proclaiming the Commune and civil war.

Although the socialist proletariat was split up into numerous sects, the

Commune was a splendid example of the unanimity with which the proletariat was able to accomplish the democratic tasks which the bourgeoisie could only proclaim. Without any particularly complex legislation, in a simple, straightforward manner, the proletariat, which had seized power, carried out the democratisation of the social system, abolished the bureaucracy, and made all official posts elective.

But two mistakes destroyed the fruits of the splendid victory. The proletariat stopped half-way: instead of setting about “expropriating the expropriators”, it allowed itself to be led astray by dreams of establishing a higher justice in the country united by a common national task; such institutions as the banks, for example, were not taken over, and Proudhonist theories about a “just exchange”, etc., still prevailed among the socialists. The second mistake was excessive magnanimity on the part of the proletariat: instead of destroying its enemies it sought to exert moral influence on them; it underestimated the significance of direct military operations in civil war, and instead of launching a resolute offensive against Versailles that would have crowned its victory in Paris, it tarried and gave the Versailles government time to gather the dark forces and prepare for the blood-soaked week of May.

But despite all its mistakes the Commune was a superb example of the great proletarian movement of the nineteenth century. Marx set a high value on the historic significance of the Commune—if, during the treacherous attempt by the Versailles gang to seize the arms of the Paris proletariat, the workers had allowed themselves to be disarmed without a fight, the disastrous effect of the demoralisation, that this weakness would have caused in the proletarian movement, would have been far, far greater than the losses suffered by the working class in the battle to defend its arms.^[2] The sacrifices of the Commune, heavy as they were, are made up for by its significance for the general struggle of the proletariat: it stirred the socialist movement throughout Europe, it demonstrated the strength of civil war, it dispelled patriotic illusions, and destroyed the naïve belief in any efforts of the bourgeoisie for common national aims. The Commune taught the European proletariat to pose concretely the tasks of the socialist revolution.

The lesson learnt by the proletariat will not be forgotten. The working class will make use of it, as it has already done in Russia during the December uprising.

The period that preceded the Russian revolution and prepared it bears a certain resemblance to the period of the Napoleonic yoke in France. In Russia, too, the autocratic clique has brought upon the country economic ruin and national humiliation. But the outbreak of revolution was held back for a long time, since social development had not yet created the conditions for a mass movement and, notwithstanding all the courage displayed, the isolated actions

against the government in the pre-revolutionary period broke against the apathy of the masses. Only the Social-Democrats, by strenuous and systematic work, educated the masses to the level of the higher forms of struggle—mass actions and armed civil war.

The Social-Democrats were able to shatter the “common national” and “patriotic” delusions of the young proletariat and later, when the Manifesto of October 17th¹⁹¹⁷ had been wrested from the tsar due to their direct intervention, the proletariat began vigorous preparation for the next, inevitable phase of the revolution—the armed uprising. Having shed “common national” illusions, it concentrated its class forces in its own mass organisations—the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, etc. And notwithstanding all the differences in the aims and tasks of the Russian revolution, compared with the French revolution of 1871, the Russian proletariat had to resort to the same method of struggle as that first used by the Paris Commune—civil war. Mindful of the lessons of the Commune, it knew that the proletariat should not ignore peaceful methods of struggle—they serve its ordinary, day-to-day interests, they are necessary in periods of preparation for revolution—but it must never forget that in certain conditions the class struggle assumes the form of armed conflict and civil war; there are times when the interests of the proletariat call for ruthless extermination of its enemies in open armed clashes. This was first demonstrated by the French proletariat in the Commune and brilliantly confirmed by the Russian proletariat in the December uprising.

And although these magnificent uprisings of the working class were crushed, there will be another uprising, in face of which the forces of the enemies of the proletariat will prove ineffective, and from which the socialist proletariat will emerge completely victorious.

All Power to the Soviets!

V.I. Lenin

“**DRIVE** nature out of the door and she will rush back through the window.” It seems that the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties have to “learn” this simple truth time and again by their own experience. They undertook to be “revolutionary democrats” and found themselves in the shoes of revolutionary democrats—they are now forced to draw the conclusions which every revolutionary democrat must draw.

Democracy is the rule of the majority. As long as the will of the majority was not clear, as long as it was possible to make it out to be unclear, at least with a grain of plausibility, the people were offered a counter-revolutionary bourgeois government disguised as “democratic.” But this delay could not last long. During the several months that have passed since February 27 the will of the majority of the workers and peasants, of the overwhelming majority of the country’s population, has become clear in more than a general sense. Their will has found expression in mass organisations—the Soviet’s of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies.

How, then, can anyone oppose the transfer of all power in the state to the Soviets? Such opposition means nothing but renouncing democracy! It means no more no less than imposing on the people a government which *admittedly* can neither come into being nor hold its ground *democratically*, i.e., as a result of truly free, truly popular elections.

It is a fact, strange as it may seem at first sight, that the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks have *forgotten* this perfectly simple, perfectly obvious and palpable truth. Their position is so false, and they are so badly confused and bewildered, that they are unable to “recover” this truth they have lost. Following the elections in Petrograd and in Moscow, the convocation of the All-Russia Peasant Congress, and the Congress of Soviets, the classes and parties throughout Russia have shown what they stand for so clearly and specifically that people who have not gone mad or deliberately got themselves into a mess and simply cannot have any illusions on this score.

To tolerate the Cadet Ministers or the Cadet government or Cadet policies means challenging democrats and democracy. This is the source of the political crises since February 27, and this also the source of the shakiness and vacillation of our government system. At every turn, daily and even hourly, appeals are being made to the people’s revolutionary spirit and to their democracy on behalf of the most authoritative government institutions and congresses. Yet the government’s policies in particular, are all departures from revolutionary principles, and breaches in democracy.

This sort of thing will not do.

It is inevitable that a situation like the present should show elements of instability now for one reason, now for another. And it is not exactly a clever policy of jib. Things are moving by fits and starts towards a point where power will be transferred to the Soviets, which is what our Party called for long ago.

What Is Soviet Power?

V.I. Lenin

WHAT is Soviet power? What is the essence of this new power, which people in most countries still will not, or cannot, understand? The nature of this power, which is attracting larger and larger numbers of workers in every country, is the following: in the past the country was, in one way or another, governed by the rich, or by the capitalists, but now, for the first time, the country is being governed by the classes, and moreover, by the masses of those classes, which capitalism formerly oppressed. Even in the most democratic and freest republics, as long as capital rules and the land remains private property, the government will always be in the hands of a small minority, nine-tenths of which consist of capitalists, or rich men.

In this country, in Russia, for the first time in the world history, the government of the country is so organised that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters, constitute those mass organisations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power. That is why, in spite of the slander that the representatives of the bourgeoisie in all countries spread about Russia, the word “Soviet” has now become not only intelligible but popular all over the world, has become the favourite word of the workers, and of all working people. And that is why, notwithstanding all the persecution to which the adherents of communism in the different countries are subjected, Soviet power must necessarily, inevitably, and in the not distant future, triumph all over the world.

We know very well that there are still many defects in the organisation of Soviet power in this country. Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past- illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.

Soviet power is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible.

The Masses Can Do Anything - Mao

[SOURCE: Extracted from a statement to a reporter of the *Hsin Hua Agency*, on 29 September 1958, following a tour of the country.]

DURING this trip, I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever. We must first complete the tasks on the iron and steel fronts. In these sectors, the masses have already been mobilized. Nevertheless, in the country as a whole, there are a few places, a few enterprises, where the work of mobilizing the masses has still not been properly carried out, where mass meetings have not been held and where the tasks, the reasons for them, and the methods have still not been made perfectly clear to the masses or discussed by the masses. There are still a few comrades who are unwilling to undertake a large-scale mass movement in the industrial sphere. They call the mass movement on the industrial front 'irregular' and disparage it as 'a rural style of work' and 'a guerrilla habit'. This is obviously incorrect.

However, while devoting ourselves to iron and steel production on a large scale, we must not sacrifice agriculture. . . The 1959 task in agriculture is to achieve a leap forward even greater than that of 1958. Consequently, we must organize the industrial and agricultural labour force effectively and extend the system of people's communes throughout the whole country. . . .

Communes Are Better

CHAIRMAN Mao emphasized particularly that arrangements for all types of work must be the subject of vigorous and uninhibited debate by the masses. He said that if plans and directions were not debated by the masses, the ideas would be yours [i.e., those of the cadres]. After such debates, the masses themselves became the masters, and were naturally prepared to work more energetically. Chairman Mao emphasized once more that the leading cadres must go frequently to the lower levels to have a look, to aid the basic-level cadres in summing up their experience, and to give guidance on the spot. When T'an Ch'i-lung (Shantung provincial secretary) reported that Pei-yuan *hsiang* in Li-ch'en *hsien* was preparing to set up large [collective] farms, Chairman Mao said: 'It is better to set up people's communes. Their advantage lies in the fact that they combine industry, agriculture, commerce, education and military affairs. This is convenient for leadership.'

[August 9, 1958]

Instruction on the Commune Education Movement

May 1963

[Source: *Long Live Mao Tse-tung Thought*, a Red Guard Publication.]

FIRST of all read the 20 materials in order to inspire discussion by everybody; first of all read these for three days. The various central bureaus and the provincial meetings should also be like this. You should not transmit central committee documents having only a framework. Don't be hasty. In any case prepare to handle it for a year, two years, and if in two years it hasn't been handled to completion then handle it for three years. This kind of big movement needs time, don't be hasty.

This revolutionary movement is the first great struggle since land reform. There has not been this sort of scope, breadth, or pervasiveness for several years. This time it is from within the Party to the outside, from the top to the bottom. The 3-evils and 5-evils campaigns were handled in the cities, the anti-rightist campaign in 1957 was carried out on the ideological line, and the anti-Kao, anti-Jao campaign was waged within the Party. This kind of class struggle involving all, both within the Party and outside the Party, has not been waged for over ten years. This time it is from within the party to outside the Party, from top to bottom, and from the cadres to the masses. This kind of understanding is beneficial. This is the first great struggle since land reform. First of all we must train the cadres at the county level and above, retrain the cadres at the production brigade level and above, and train the cadres in production teams and the positive elements among the poor and lower-middle peasants.

In areas where there are no ants we must not insist on going to find ants. For example, there was one category of communes and brigades which in the past advanced class struggle and advanced socialist education by initiating a movement to "by all means you must go and find landlords and rich peasants, there must be no exceptions" this is also bad.

Among the people there are many contradictions of practically every kind, big and small. The Honan materials speak of a party branch which is very good; other material states that after a certain commune party branch underwent cleansing, there were only two persons who truly had not been reformed. You cannot say that this branch is bad, it was still better than 95 percent. Looking at our cadre today there are those who have not reformed, but we cannot say the

number is very large. There are a few who are not at all tainted with extravagance and waste, with the idea of eating more and enjoying more benefits; the majority is imbued with this. The cleansing method of handling is very good! During this 'four clean-ups' and '5-antis campaign'[5] everybody sweated a little and took a steam bath. Only when you are relaxed and happy can you lightly make ready for the front and unite against the enemy. Why can you unite against the enemy when you are relaxed and happy? When our bodies are dirty we have no strength, but after we became clean we are able to unite against the enemy. There are some cadres who eat more and take more advantages, and there are some who illicitly cohabit with the daughters of landlords and rich peasants. If you are not clean you are unable to face the enemy. There are some persons who are very energetic in struggling against the enemy but who are not very positive and are hesitant about confronting contradictions among the people.

In resolving contradictions among the people, eating more and taking more advantages may be resolved by merely running out yourself and returning the bribes; having done this you will no longer be considered a corrupt element. In the future, organizations, factories, and enterprises can also handle things in this manner. Announce on the spot that they will not be considered corrupt elements and that their names will not be publicized. In the Northeast Bureau there were several who were corrupted by 100 or 200 yuan. They spoke out themselves. A meeting was convened and they were not regarded as corrupt. In handling cases where the corruption is great, meaning over 10,000 yuan, if the person himself handles the matter and returns the money, the punishment may be mild. There must be both strictness and a policy. There must certainly be the four clean-ups and the five antis; without the antis it won't do. We certainly must handle the matter clearly. Not returning the bribes and the plunder won't do. But we must return in accord with the situation and in accord with reason. When there is a case of eating more and enjoying more benefits, we don't want to refund with excessive humiliation; it would be bad to make it impossible for the cadre to continue to make a living. There are those who have already eaten or used what they took. In such cases educate them to undergo examination by the masses and return a portion and participate in labor. In this way the masses will not be able to demand again that there be a return and there will be a return by stages and by groups so that it will be possible to continue to make a living. It is also possible to adopt the method of self-assessment and public discussion, but this policy is complicated. One perceives himself as good.

In the course of this campaign those requiring criticism and those requiring removal from positions constitute a minority. Those requiring punishment are also a minority. Those cadres needing punishment possibly do not constitute even one percent. We don't want too many. We must instead do more education work and strengthen leadership over the campaign. Sometimes we need to rely on the broad masses of cadres of the communes and brigades of various regions.

Those who have gone to the top should not monopolize all undertakings but should mobilize the broad masses of cadres and should rely on the broad masses of cadres to handle it. When we use this sort of method - the method of self-education and the method of mobilizing the broad masses of cadres - the resulting strength is great.

One resolutely grasps the campaign, and one is afraid of stirring up trouble.

(Comrade X X says: I understand the Chairman's mood - first of all handle, and second handle well. When we regularly reflect the situation to the Chairman and receive instructions from the Chairman, we must not create trouble.)

In the three great revolutionary struggles it won't do if we don't grasp well; we must grasp well.

Pay attention to summing up experience. Return to the central bureaus and hold ten days of meetings, handle a month of work. In July hold a central bureau meetings to sum up experience, handle the situation for a whole, and then at the end of July and in August the central committee will convene a meeting. Besides this, you must still handle other things.

Only with strong leadership is it possible to mobilize a campaign, by stages and by groups, to criticize and handle without being considered backward. This campaign must raise high the self-awareness of various regions. The central bureau, province, municipality, and country persons must go down and campaign together.

The four clean-ups campaign has been waged, but class struggle is still unpolished. We must enhance self-awareness; we must loyally and sincerely help the communes and brigades handle work well, help the cadres bathe in warm water, and help handle well the four cleanups. Except for those cases where it would be impractical, in cases which are rotten, which are degenerate and cannot be helped, or which are too decayed, we must send a work team to handle it in their stead; otherwise we must honestly and sincerely help them to handle their work.

I am not clear as to how you have been approaching cadres. Now it seems that you must educate cadres by persuasion, and you must especially employ concrete evidence to educate by persuasion. You can speak according to reason and say that something is so or you can take concrete evidence and speak; there is concrete evidence of class struggle. The concrete evidence of Hsi-Yang County, Chekiang's participation in labor, and the four good documents are concrete evidence. Examine for a while whether or not we have spoken more according to reason and spoken comparatively less according to evidence.

Have you had an opportunity to go to a region and handle affairs for ten days or so? (We said no.) Have you gone down to see whether or not the cadres are very anxious? Once familiar one is not so anxious. Respect people more,

don't find fault; the "three don't" are correct. We must link up with the cadres, we must wash our hands and bathe, and we must grasp for a while.

This campaign must manifest killing without leaving any traces.

Mobilizing the masses to handle the four clean-ups is a serious matter. The Hopeh experience shows that some public security organs were perplexed in handling the mobilization of the masses in the four clean-ups. Some people said that the public security department handles class struggle while the control commission handles problems among the people. Of course we must handle, but besides this we still must thoroughly mobilize the masses and rely on the masses.

Once the program is grasped this campaign is easy to manage. Handle it by groups and by stages, handle the second and the third groups and don't think that there is no honor; there is still honor.

(The mass opinion: there are places where we have gone on the spot and the rain has moistened our skin.) After going on the spot then handle some more, just don't harm people, don't act as though it is enemy against enemy, no. . .

(Everybody's opinion: If the rascals don't come out, it won't do. Does the Chairman agree with our viewpoint? On the 19th there were people murdered at the big building. In Heilungkiang a landlord-rich peasant element killed 38 people and last year 13 counter-revolutionaries were executed and buried. In Shanghai a man was killed, he was hanged in a lavatory. But he had been long absent from home, a "transient gentleman." Speaking correctly, he wanted to redress a grievance; there was basically no question of struggling against him, so he died.)

We must resolutely conduct education by persuasion, undertake experiments on-the-spot by groups and by stages, draw a clear line of demarcation, and unite more than 95 percent of the masses and cadres. When there is a strong leadership, it is only necessary to handle things well and few troublemakers will emerge.

Don't fight an unprepared war. If materials haven't been prepared and the troops haven't been trained well, don't go and handle it. This war is a nationwide revolutionary movement and we must make war as we did during the War of Liberation, during the Liao-Shen campaign, and during the Chinchou, Huai-Hai, and crossing the Yangtze campaigns. We don't want to fight a great battle of 100 regiments, we don't want to use the method of fighting employed during the southern Anhwei incident.

Secondly, during the War of Liberation several campaigns achieved a nationwide victory. In this war if we fight it well there will be a nationwide revolutionary victory, and there will be an even greater contribution to world revolution.

The Long March to Proletarian Democracy

KN Ramachandran

THE email message from com. Dipankar Chakrobarthy stating that *Aneek* is going to bring out a special issue on “the reasons behind the collapse of the socialist countries” and asking for an article on “Problems of Democracy in Socialism” was received at a significant time when the fourth issue of the theoretical journal of the CPI(ML), *The Marxist-Leninist*, had already come out stating that the next issue of the journal “shall focus on the cardinal issue of developing the understanding about proletarian democracy transcending the concepts of bourgeois democracy, based on the theoretical contributions of Marx to Mao and the practice in the erstwhile socialist countries”.

We are of the view that such open theoretical discussions on the reasons why the International Communist Movement (ICM) which had reached such great heights by 1950s with one-third of the world population living in socialist countries, national liberation movements challenging the imperialist camp in all continents and powerful Communist Parties leading the working class movements in large number of countries, when the “East Wind of Socialism looked like prevailing over the West Wind of Imperialism”, has faced such severe setbacks, or almost a collapse, to present thoroughly weakened, splintered condition shall be helpful to the re-organisation of the Communist movement going on at international and national levels at present. The All India Special Conference of CPI(ML) held at Bhopal from November 7 to 12 focussed mainly on this question.

Analysing the reasons for the present severe setbacks, the basic documents adopted by the Conference pointed out that this is the third critical conjuncture in the history of the International Communist Movement (ICM). First, when, after capitalism emerging as the leading force and working class aspirations were fumbling around utopian socialist ideas, in 1848 Marx and Engels came out with *The Communist Manifesto*, putting forward the theoretical perspective and practical breakthrough to develop class struggle to reach socialist transformation to communism, the only alternative to the capitalist system. The great advances made by the working class movement in Europe and North America, later, including Paris Commune, were achieved based on the scientific outlook of Marxism.

But beset by the intensifying cyclic internal crises and challenged by the growing working class movements organised under the First International

followed by the Second International, by the end of the 19th century the forces of reaction turned laissez faire capitalism to monopoly capitalism, imperialism. The earlier forms of primitive accumulation from the colonies were increasingly replaced by export of capital, completing the division of the world among the imperialist countries. The Second International collapsed as it failed to correctly analyse this transformation of the capitalist imperialist system. In this second critical juncture Lenin developed the Marxist positions according to the conditions in the imperialist era through his epochal work “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”. He put forward the theory and practice of proletarian revolution in imperialist era, led October Revolution to victory which gave birth to Soviet Union, and from the ashes of Second International organised the Third or Communist International (Comintern). It put forward the theory and practice of World Proletarian Socialist Revolution giving birth to a number of Communist/Workers Parties creating conditions for the great advances of the ICM to the heights of 1950s noted above.

During the post-Second World War decades, in spite of the great heights reached by the ICM, the seeds of the present severe setbacks were also sown. The ICM started facing two forms of challenges. Firstly, faced with the inherent crises of the capitalist imperialist system that had led to the Great Depression of 1930 and the growing challenges from the socialist forces led by Soviet Union, when US imperialism came to the leadership of the imperialist camp during the Second World War, it initiated the transformation of the prevailing colonial forms of plunder with neo-colonial forms, starting with the 1941 Atlantic Charter and 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement giving birth to IMF and World Bank. A process of ‘de-colonisation’ was initiated after the war replacing territorial control with the control through finance capital, MNCs and market system. It was not colonialism coming to an end or US-led imperialist camp weakening as the post-Stalin CPSU leadership evaluated. It was replacement of old colonialism with more pernicious and barbarous neo-colonialism.

In recognising this new avatar of imperialism Stalin’s leadership showed many weaknesses. The dissolution of Comintern, becoming member of IMF, World Bank and later UN, recognising formation of Israel, one-sided emphasis on world peace, etc. were part of these weaknesses. The Khrushchovite leadership failing to recognise the pernicious neo-colonialism became its apologists and later under Brezhnev the Soviet leadership became partners in the neo-colonial plunder. In spite of recognition of this danger in its 1963 documents, the CPC could not develop its understanding on this question as the inner-party struggle intensified. As a result, the ICM failed to develop its understanding about the new strategic offensive of US-led imperialist camp. While all the Communist parties following CPSU guideline degenerated to social democratic path, those upholding the ‘Chinese Path’ became worshippers of the ‘left’ adventurist Lin Biaoist line which was propagated as the line of Mao. Even those who rejected

the sectarian line later, failed to grasp the danger posed by the neo-colonial offensive, now intensified under neo-liberal policies. As a result the search for the reasons for present debacle of the ICM has led most to the condition of blind men trying to explain the elephant.

The significance of the Bhopal Conference is that it has developed an international perspective according to the conditions of neo-colonial offensive by the imperialist forces calling for re-organisation of the Communist International, it has evaluated the 'de-colonised' India as a country under neo-colonisation with the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie becoming junior partners of imperialists, and it has recognised the changes that has taken place in the semi-feudal, pre-capitalist relations under neo-colonisation, developing in the process a Path of Revolution according to the concrete conditions in India, rejecting the path of 'protracted people's war' and 'area-wise seizure of political power'. These steps have emboldened us to take up a critique of the economic construction followed in Soviet Union and later in China in the fourth issue of *The Marxist-Leninist*. It is in continuation to this a discussion on the problems of democratic practice pursued in the socialist countries is taken up. According to us the severe setbacks suffered by the ICM is principally due to its failure to recognise the challenge posed by imperialism in its neo-colonial phase, and the weaknesses shown by the Communist Parties leading the socialist countries after Lenin in developing the understanding about imperialism. The weakness in developing the democratic practice and in providing a basically different orientation to the economic construction in socialist countries from that of the imperialist countries should be evaluated in this context.

LESSONS OF PARIS COMMUNE

Marx said: "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one in to the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." From Marx's time, from the experience of the Paris Commune, not only the socialist countries, but also all the Communist parties, however small they may be, are confronting the challenge of translating the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in to real proletarian democracy transcending the bureaucratic character of the bourgeois democracy.

The bourgeois democracy is the bureaucratic dictatorship of the minority over the vast majority. On the contrary, the dictatorship of the proletariat is democracy for the vast majority and dictatorship over a minority. It is easily said. So far the best example of it is the brief experience of the Paris Commune. Every attempt to go beyond this, to establish the democracy of the majority, has so far failed. On the contrary, both CPSU and CPC and the socialist states led by them degenerated to capitalist path and bureaucratic dictatorships. Same

is the case of the other erstwhile socialist countries and Communist/Workers parties formed under the guidance of the Comintern. Even the experience of a large number of Marxist-Leninist organisations formed in 1960s and later is not different. This is the grave challenge faced by the ICM. If these organisations, even microscopic ones, are reduced to individualism and bureaucratic tendencies, and the adventurist groups to worse than militarist attitudes, what is the meaning about the socialism they are preaching? How a healthy democratic atmosphere can be developed in them enabling them to take up the theoretical, political and organisational challenges faced by the Communist movement?

Developing what they had stated in The Communist Manifesto both Marx and Engels in their 1872 Preface to the German edition wrote: “One thing was especially proved by the Commune, viz., that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” What was the specific form of the proletarian state Paris Commune began to create? “The first decree of the Commune was the suppression of the standing army, and its replacement by the armed people.” Then: “The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class.... The police, which until then had been the instrument of the Government, was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen’s wages. The privileges and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.... Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the instruments of physical force of the old government, the Commune proceeded at once to break the instrument of spiritual suppression, the power of the priests.... The judicial functionaries lost their sham independence... they were thenceforward to be elective, responsible, and revocable....” (Marx).

Marx explained further: ““Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress [ver - and zertreten] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business.”

Though Paris Commune was suppressed by the forces of reaction within four months, it had sown the seeds of proletarian democracy for ever.

SOVIET EXPERIENCE

It was in the course of the class struggle against the Tsarist dictatorship the Soviets of workers and later soldiers’ soviets and peasant soviets emerged,

often spontaneously. The Bolsheviks could recognise their importance as the centres of political power of the people. By the time of February Revolution and later during the October Revolution, the All Russian Soviet of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants played a major role in mobilising the masses for revolution. As later elaborately explained in *The State and Revolution* (1918), Lenin made extensive studies of Paris Commune and helped the growth of the Soviets during and after the October Revolution. They were developed as the real centres of people's power. Conscious efforts were made after revolution to form them all over Soviet Union and to develop them in the service of socialist construction. The Soviets played a major role in the success of the Sabotnik movement also.

Under the leadership of Lenin daring experiments were made to develop proletarian democracy in all spheres, at all levels. Lenin was not afraid of even allowing factions within the CPSU, with their own organs. The inner party struggle was allowed full freedom, while struggling to establish the revolutionary ideological-political line of the Party. Similarly, through encouraging the soviets at all levels the democratic atmosphere was developed under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

After Lenin, when the land reforms were accelerated, the collective farms were started and the socialist construction was speeded up through Five Year Plans, the class struggle started intensifying in all spheres. As Mao later said during 1976 in the context of his last struggle against the capitalist roaders, the capitalist roaders trying to reverse the socialist path were within the CPSU itself. They had the support of the international bourgeoisie also. In this situation Stalin's leadership faced the challenge of defeating the threat to socialism from within as well as outside the Party. These challenges had to be fought and defeated. As far as Lenin was concerned, fighting against Trotsky who had in effect stood for abandoning socialist construction in Soviet Union ridiculing it as 'socialism in one country', he defended it always upholding Soviet Union as the base area of world revolution. The international significance of the Soviet experiment was persistently pointed out. Lenin, even while showing steel like determination to defend revolutionary positions, encouraged different trends to come out in the open and wage struggle.

But during the post-Lenin years the space for inner party democracy went on shrinking leading to conspiratorial activities by those holding differing views. The soviets started disappearing from the scene. The Stakhnovite Movement of 1935 was almost the last effort to unleash people's initiative in socialist construction. A mechanical understanding negating the existence and development of class struggle in a socialist country started gaining dominance. In 1934, in the 17th Congress of the CPSU, Stalin declared that "from now on the socialist economy becomes the only driving force in the national economy". In 1939, in the 18th Congress of the CPSU, Stalin announced that Soviet society

no longer contains antagonistic, hostile classes and that the exploiting classes have been eliminated. The compromising attitude towards Soviet patriotism went on gaining strength leading to the slogan “defence of the fatherland” when Hitlerite forces attacked Soviet Union. All these led to the weakening of the creative, revolutionary spirit of Lenin’s experiments reducing democratic space and paving the way for strengthening of bureaucratic tendencies. As a result, when the Titoist leadership in Yugoslavia degenerated to capitalist path, though it was expelled from the Cominform in 1948, no theoretical struggle could be waged against it. While Stalin should be upheld for defending the Soviet Union and the socialist forces, it was the various theoretical and political weaknesses which surfaced during his time that made the usurpation of power and degeneration of Soviet Union to capitalist path easier for the Krushchovites.

CHINESE EXPERIENCE

Whether bureaucracy or democracy gains ground depends mainly on which class gains hegemony. After revolution, the means of production are brought either under public ownership or class ownership. How far this formal socialisation is turned in to reality through development of genuine forms of democracy determines which class really gains hegemony. That is why as soon as power was seized Paris Commune tried to turn the formal socialisation of the means of production in to real one through abolition of the bourgeois democratic institutions with proletarian forms of power. If centres of people’s power are not created and continuously developed even after revolution the bureaucratic class can come to hegemony. So Lenin called for discovering forms for expanding democracy to the utmost level and experimenting with them. For him such experiments constituted the chief elements in social revolution.

In China once the tasks of the People’s Democratic Revolution was completed in the main, in the 1956 Eighth Party Congress itself the capitalist roaders could gain majority putting forward the ‘theory of productive forces’. Though reduced to minority position, Mao soon retaliated launching the socialist rectification, great leap forward and Commune movements. Mao could challenge the capitalist roaders in CPSU and within the CPC by putting forward the General Line of the ICM in 1963. The Cultural Revolution was launched in 1966 when Mao found that the capitalist roaders who had entrenched within the Party, administration and army can be overthrown only by unleashing people’s initiative. As a result, Liu Shaochi and Deng like capitalist roaders were thrown out. Possibility for the emergence of Shanghai Commune like experiments and bringing political power under Revolutionary Committees were opened up. It was a critical turning point. But the emergence of Lin Biaoist line with ‘left’ adventurist positions and its domination of 1969 Ninth Congress weakened Mao’s positions. In spite of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) Mao and the socialist roaders remained a minority. It was reflected once again when after the 10th Congress of 1973, with the support of centrist Chou Enlai,

Deng could regain positions.

It was in this context Mao explained: “The present GPCR is only the first. There will be inevitably many more in the future. The issue of who will win in the revolution can only be settled over a long historical period. If things are not properly handled, it is possible for a capitalist restoration to take place at any time. It should not be thought by any Party member or any one of the people in our country that everything will be right after one or two GPCRs or even three or four. We must be very much on the alert and never lose vigilance”.

He stated in 1969: “Apparently we could not do without the GPCR for our base was not solid. From my observation, I am afraid that in a fairly large majority of factories — I do not mean all or overwhelming majority — leadership was not in the hands of real Marxists and the masses of the workers They followed the line of Liu Shaochi’s just resorting to material incentives, putting profit in command, and so forth This shows that the revolution is still unfinished.”

Mao who stated that there is large extent of metaphysics in Stalin’s positions, declared that even after revolution class struggle shall continue in a socialist country. He called for “let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred thoughts contend”, so that a continuous revolution can be waged against the capitalist roaders. According to Mao: “In a word, China is a socialist country. Even now she practices an eight grade wage system, distribution according to work and exchange through money, and in all this differs very little from the old society. What is different is that the system of ownership has been changed.” But in his talks with William Hinton and others during 1974-75 he repeated that the power has not come to the people, and who will win is not certain.

In 1976, waging his last struggle against Deng Tsiaoping, Mao said: “You are making socialist revolution and yet you do not know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right inside the Communist party — those in power taking the capitalist road”. So in a last ditch battle he called for strengthening Shanghai Commune like initiatives, for arming the people’s militia and the launching of a new Cultural Revolution. But the capitalist roaders had regrouped and soon after Mao’s death later that year through a military coup they ruthlessly suppressed the socialist roaders and usurped power.

ON DEVELOPING PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY

The severe setbacks suffered by the ICM do not mean that the great lessons of Paris Commune, Lenin’s experiments and the GPCR led by Mao have become irrelevant. As imperialist system is intensifying its ferocious attacks on world people under neo-colonial forms, that socialism is the only alternative is becoming more and more clear day by day. The challenge faced by the international proletariat and oppressed peoples, and the Marxist-Leninist parties

leading them is how to grasp these lessons and develop the theory and practice of revolution to seize political power and to advance socialist transformation according to the present concrete conditions.

Vast changes have taken place at global level and in India during last few decades. In spite of the sway of imperialist plunder and hegemony through the capital-market system, through the domination of IMF-World Bank-WTO and MNCs and through the spreading of decadent imperialist values and ramp-gang culture, in spite of the setbacks suffered by the ICM, the people's consciousness has comparatively developed. The objective situation is becoming favourable for building the Communist parties and mobilising the masses. But to make this "third long march" really meaningful lessons should be learned from the positive and negative experiences of the past.

The question of developing democracy, establishing people's political power cannot be handled as something to be taken up after the capture of political power. Or it is just not a question of forms of democracy; it is the content of democracy which should be put at the centre. The very form of the production system of a MNC or a corporate house, or in general in the imperialist countries and in the countries under neo-colonisation at present, whatever may be the extent of its internationalisation or 'de-centralisation', functions with a centralised bureaucratic administration and army protecting this 'command economy'. The present dominant 'development' concepts recreate this. In spite of the soviets in Soviet Union, the People's Communes and "walking on two legs" policy in China, there were no basic breaking away from the 'development' concepts propagated by imperialist system. First and foremost, the Communist parties should develop the search for a people's development policy, centring on the people and an organic relation between the people and the nature, as part of the mobilisation of the masses for socialism.

The Bolshevik concept of Party building calls for a Party built on the principles of democratic centralism and surrounded by class and mass organisations. But compromise with the bureaucratic ruling system or militarism reduces them to bureaucratic structures. The worst examples are CPI(Marxist) on the one hand, and CPI(Maoist) on the other.

A Party shall remain Communist, capable of waging revolutionary struggle and assimilating revolutionary experience of the past only when it develops its theoretical, political line according to present concrete conditions, remains a proletarian party with firm class line and uphold the perspective that it is people, people alone, who create history. Only such a Communist Party can develop proletarian democracy, breaking away from the narrow confines of bourgeois democracy and all forms of bureaucratic influences. Only it can lead the people along the long revolution towards socialist transformation and communism with an international perspective.

Towards Understanding Indian Society

Observer

THE IMMEDIATE provocation for this note is the critique published by Proletarian Path edited by Sri. Moni Guha on Sri. RS Rao's book 'Towards Understanding Semi-feudal Semi-colonial Society'. The 1970 Programme of CPI (ML) analyses Indian society as semi-feudal, semi-colonial. As the title of the book itself indicates the articles of Rao compiled in this volume accept this evaluation. It is a collection of articles written during last quarter of a century from late 1960s. Even while remaining as an eminent academic scholar his efforts to be consistent in this stand should be respected.

Eminence in academic field is not a guarantee for one's eminence in the field of Marxist political thoughts. Academic political economy views Marxism merely as one among the various political economies it is handling. In our academies Marxism is just a body put on the dissection table of the bourgeois economics. It is merely a lifeless structural form of Marxism which is vivisected. Even while he is an eminent academic economic scholar, R.S. Rao's View regarding Marxism are not free from these limitations. His views on capitalism, imperialism and in general on Marxist political economy are not free from these weaknesses. In this context definitely they are not just individual limitations of an economic scholar. On the contrary they are the weaknesses of the organization he is linked to. It is always the organization and the movement it gives rise to which is duty bound to open up new vistas of class struggle in the fields of theory and practice which should help individuals like him to overcome these limitations.

The Chinese model and Indian reality

The path of Naxalbari which got developed in the late 1960s in the course of struggle against revisionism had, along with its revolutionary greatness, the weaknesses of a nascent movement. Contrary to the evaluations of the *Third International*, the Krushchevite revisionism had evaluated that with the background of a powerful socialist bloc the bourgeoisie in the colonial as well as 'newly independent' countries will be able to complete the tasks of bourgeois democratic revolution. It propagated that in the changed post-World War II conditions of a weakened imperialism and powerful socialist bloc, with the help of Soviet Union and in collaboration with this bourgeoisie even peaceful transition to socialism is possible through parliamentary path. It is in this background, with the backing of *Colonial Thesis* and Mao's concept of New Democratic Revolution the Naxalbari path was put forward. In the context of

the *Great Debate* within the International Communist Movement it not only stood along with CPC, but also upheld the *Chinese Path*. Emphasising the comprador character of Indian bourgeoisie and Indian state, and the relevance for anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles by declaring that the stage of Indian revolution is that of New Democratic, it rejected the revisionist positions and came closer to Indian realities. CPC had put forward during the *Great Debate* the political guidelines about neo-colonialism in the changed world situation, against the concept that imperialism has weakened. Even while recognizing Chinese revolution as a former mode, the path of Indian revolution had to be developed starting from these experiences of the CPC and thereafter taking lessons focusing on Indian history and concrete realities here in accordance with the present world situation. But this collection of articles show that Rao's views are still based on a trend which is proving itself incapable of doing this.

This book does not provide revolutionary development of theory and accumulation of knowledge of last quarter of a century. Any thing which stagnates in history does not reproduce revolutionisation. Though these articles in the collection creates the impression of consistently sticking to old positions, after quarter century of historical current and numerous favourable and unfavourable experiences leading to the new historical context, such a stand is totally incapable of completing the historical mission of Naxalbari. The empirical studies Mr. Rao made directly or indirectly during these years really touch upon many central issues concerning Indian agricultural structure. But the framework he is sticking to is incapable of assimilating these realities. As a result he is compelled to formulate more and more non-Marxist analytical paradigms.

As Lenin has pointed out, wherever he is talking about semi-colonial, it is about a transformatory form. Lenin pointed out semi-colonies like China, Turkey etc. as isolated cases. Except for the imperialist aspect of the colonial domination, its Chinese form had many specific characteristics. China never came under a centralised colonial rule. Moreover the bourgeois democratic revolution had become atleast partially victorious in China before World War I and October Revolution, and the *Colonial Thesis* about the character of bourgeoisie in the colonial countries and a form of bourgeois rule came into existence in China. Direct colonization was limited to some cities and coastal regions in China. In the situation when many centuries old centralised dynasties came to an end, in many areas it was actually the rule of feuding lords. Mao calls this society semi-feudal semi-colonial in the sense that imperialist influence was manifest in China, and including developing exchange relations in which capitalist influences had started making transformations in different spheres including agrarian sector. Without taking into consideration this transformation from the feudal conditions it is not possible to define the semi-feudal situation. At the same time Mao emphatically states that the intention of imperialism is not to make China an imperialist country. It was in the background of the betrayal

of democratic revolution by Chiang Kaisheck during the Northern Expedition which was launched as a part of expanding democratic revolution in co-operation with socialist Soviet Union and the CPC that the CPC leads the NDR to its completion in China as a continuation of the democratic revolution started under the leadership of Sun Yatsen. While viewing in this way there are many basic differences between China and India with regard to revolutionary context, situation and history. Outside the very general similarities in the content of the anti-imperialist anti-feudal NDRs in the countries under colonization, transplanting the semi-feudal semi-colonial evaluation about pre-revolutionary Chinese society to the evaluation about India today will be like cutting the feet according to the size of the shoes, according to the analysis of Mao himself.

Whatever details of interpretations one may give, Indian reality cannot be analysed within the semi-feudal semi-colonial framework. It is by utilizing the weaknesses from these limitations of the views put forward by R.S. Rao that *Proletarian Path* is trying to sell the old Krushchevite wine in a new bottle. Though we may have to mention the erroneous content of Rao's position again later, the main goal of this note is to point out the bankruptcy of the rightist theory about 'capitalist development' put forward by *Proletarian Path* (PP) and similar forces.

Absurd theory on caste

This article in *Proletarian Path* achieves any significance only because it is putting forward a view which has even influenced atleast a very small section among the erstwhile Marxist-Leninist groups. Though there may be differences among those who put forward this view, nothing beyond a very general examination of the *Proletarian Path* article is aimed at here. The debate about production relations in the agrarian sector had started much earlier in India. In the background of the *Proletarian Path* critique against Rao what is intended here is to point out that there are many factors and different viewpoints neglected by the protagonists of this view.

Though the writer in *Proletarian Path* quotes Marxist works including *the Capital*, the logic of Capital is not visible in it. In another sense, what Lenin often points out as the basis of the Marxist view including his own contributions, the 'concrete analysis of the concrete situation' is absent here. Such lifeless quotations only belongs to the category of scholasticism. As pointed out earlier, there are already here many inheritors to the Krushchevite position which magnifies the capability of the colonial bourgeoisie for democratic revolution. If Naxalbari rejected this heritage in its struggle against revisionism, what is now intended by these intellectual groups is nothing but another effort to degenerate Naxalbari politics.

Though it will be meaningless to examine the arguments in the PP article one by one, in order to examine how helpful is the viewpoint put forward by it

for explaining the Indian realities, it will be sufficient to examine some of the views it has put forward regarding caste question. Even PP cannot negate the fact that caste stem in whatever form it may be, is still strong here. So it has to explain it somehow in relation to its 'theory of capitalism'. The PP article says: "An important aspect of caste was division of labour, wherein social production was arranged. The Indian village community had its caste based division of labour Division of labour as a relation of production is also typical of the capitalist mode of production. This facilitates the transformation of a certain division of labour from a pre-capitalist one to a capitalist one" Even without going in to the details it can be seen that the author of this article has very little understanding about the caste system and capitalism itself. Under capitalism, taking in to consideration the male-female division in human society also, division of labour is universal. With the formation of class society it plays a dominant role. Such general statements as made by the author do not help us to understand a phenomenon like caste system or a social system like capitalism. Castes took birth millenniums before when the division of labour in the ancient agricultural society is linked in specific way with reproductive relations or marriage system based on blood relations, and customs. Caste system came in to existence in history not by putting some division of labour, some endogamy and a few rituals in a test tube and shaking it to create a new mix. The origin of caste system should be positioned within the specific characteristics which were part of the comprehensiveness of the production process in the agricultural community that took shape in India. Not only within the capitalist system, but from the very beginning of the class society itself the division of labour has existed in various forms all over the world in relation with the production process. But the caste system came into existence nowhere else outside Indian subcontinent. PP's rationalism fails to explain this phenomenon. On the other hand, in Europe which became the cradle of capitalism, though the caste system was not existing there, during the pre-capitalist period property and matrimonial relations based on blood relations similar in many ways to those of caste system existed in various forms. One of the progressive aspects of bourgeois democracy is that it removed such inequalities based on birth rights.

There is no need for further expanding this question here. The only intention for raising this question here is to show that the PP logics are not helping us in anyway to understand the social realities as far as India is concerned.

Role of the Colonial state

Here we have to examine some of the aspects which were often omitted or not given necessary importance in the mode of production debate. Unlike in China, In India by various means British aggressors could make it a part of British empire. While talking about the colonial feudal alliance it should be remembered that it is an alliance of the colonial power with the feudal forces who were defeated and made to serve the imperialist interests. These feudal,

pre-feudal relations which were brought under its domination in this way were not only subordinated to its exchange relations, but also made part of the revenue income which was part of the colonial capital accumulation. This should be understood if we have to correctly realize the anti-imperialist aspect of all the anti-feudal struggles that took place in India during this period. Colonialism also transformed all agrarian relations all over India in to part of its revenue collections. In effect almost all the landlords, directly or indirectly also were agents for tax collection of the British government or its middlemen. It has to be recognized that feudalism which existed in India after British conquest was not belonging to any form of 'original agrarian relation' but was colonial feudalism.

Its importance lies in distinguishing the role of the state given shape to by British imperialism in India. When in European feudal countries the feudal king was dominant, in countries like India the feudal relations were dominated by the colonial state based on the prominence of capital. Especially when feudalism is not merely a landlord-tenant relation, but also a socio-political system the importance of the above mentioned factor increases.

It is here where those who model their studies on the growth of capitalism in India mechanically on Lenin's Growth of Capitalism in Russia or Marx's European studies commits grave mistakes. In these countries it was the growth of capitalist economic relations within the womb of the comparatively backward feudalism which led to bourgeois revolutions and to the establishment of the bourgeois state. As far as the colonies are concerned, the capitalist relations are growing there under the state controlled by monopoly capitalism which had already started becoming moribund under its regulations and interests. The concept of growing trend of capitalism used by Lenin is not becoming relevant here in the same form. For here the dominant force is not a feudal dynasty which is backward compared to the capitalist system, but the economic and political control of monopoly capitalism. Here more than the natural laws of history, it is the control from above which plays the important role in a specific period. In the economic studies of colonies, the economics should be invariably understood as the political economy.

Relevance of the Colonial Thesis of Third International

Perhaps the plantations which were started here after colonial domination belongs to the earliest capitalist enterprises here. This capitalist development directly initiated by colonial capital cannot be naturally mentioned as the growth of capitalism in India. Afterwards whatever capitalist development has taken place here directly or indirectly was as a part of colonial capital, or under its influence and control. Historical experiences teaches that bourgeois development capable of undermining the economic and political domination of imperialist capital is not possible in these countries in this situation. After World War I, especially after October Revolution Lenin's Colonial Thesis has explained this

with great insight. What is often forgotten by these scholars like the PP author is that after Marx, Engels and Lenin, whatever may be their limitations, under Third International indepth studies and discussion had continued about agrarian question and the economy of the colonial countries, and many basic documents were put forward enriching the International Communist Movement. What are not continuations of the contributions of Third International have already historically become part of anti-communist category all through this period.

Understanding the character and relations of the Indian state existing here before and after 1947 is very important in defining and determining the character of the decolonization which took place and the political independence gained here. The Indian state which was existing here as a part of British crown was transferred without making any basic change. It could happen because the Indian bourgeoisie which was in the leadership of the Indian independence movement had reached a 'raproachment' with imperialist bourgeoisie, as explained by Lenin in the Colonial Thesis. If the real reasons which are preventing R. S. Rao to correctly understand these developments are his failure to study and evaluate the changes that has taken place to imperialism in the post-World War II period and about the specific characteristics of neocolonialism, what is working behind the PP is the ghost of Krushchevism which was characterized as the 'Apologists of Neocolonialism' by the CPC during the Great Debate.

From colonial agrarian structure to neocolonial agrarian structure

A detailed explanation regarding the comprehensive out look about neocolonialism cannot be included within the purview of this note. The basic issue is that the neocolonial state in countries like India which have come in to existence as a part of the decolonization process during the post-World War II period are the creation of the consensus between international imperialist capital and the bourgeoisie in these countries which have integrated themselves with the former in numerous forms. This state is not serving the interests of the national capital but ultimately the interests of the international imperialist capital.

The capitalist relations are now spreading in the neo-colonies like India under the influence of imperialist capital. The changes which are taking place today in all the fields including the agrarian sector should be seen as a continuation of the changes through reforms and making of laws that had taken place during the colonial period. What can be clearly understood while examining the Colonial Thesis and later documents of the Third International, documents of the undivided CPI during the colonial period, and the documents prepared by various commissions appointed during British period is that most of the problems faced by the colonial agrarian sector are still continuing in various forms. We had published in the middle of last decade such a study about Kerala, a state where comparatively better land reforms were implemented compared to any other state in India. In that study we had explained the absurdity

of the theory that capitalism is growing as an independent force in the agrarian sector in Kerala.

An evaluation presenting the statistics in detail to substantiate it is beyond the scope of this note. But even without them the orientation of the land reforms in India in which even the forms in which they were implemented is not difficult to understand. They claim to avoid middlemen in the sector and to overcome food deficit. Alongwith this they intend to remove the obstacles for increasing agrarian production. They also put forward land ceiling. When these land reforms also explain that another objective of them as bringing together fragmented pieces of land for co-operative agriculture, what is going to happen to this proposal within the existing system is not difficult to understand. Land ceiling is existing in different states in different forms. Or legally any concentration in agrarian sector is negated except through co-operativisation. From this we can find out the reasons for the secret why agrarian production is not increasing corresponding to the increase in land ceiling as pointed out by Rao These statistics can at the most point out the contradictions within the system. They cannot explain the reasons for them. Even Rao who is a spokesman of semi-feudalism is utilizing the very same statistics which are collected based on the predetermination that the agrarian sector is capitalist and without considering the real production relations in the economy. This is a question concerning how to use the tools of the bourgeois economy. Though the land concentration under landlord system and capitalist concentration are not different statistically, they are qualitatively different. Under land concentration without overthrowing the feudal landlord system and under bourgeois land reforms from above, the agricultural production do not develop under neo-colonisation as it develops in the capitalist countries. Or, development of capitalist relations under neo-colonisation does not mean that India becomes capitalist in character.

It is not difficult to calculate that outside the plantations, beyond a certain amount of land concentration all other land concentrations are in the main linked to rich landlords and agricultural bourgeoisie.

Including benami ownership there are many big holdings which may not reflect in statistics available Even the former prime minister Narasimha Rao had become a centre of attraction in this matter. Another point a contradiction should be seen alongwith this. The land reforms which helped in fragmenting the land holdings and which prevented land concentration invariably exempted plantations from their purview The reasons for exempting them which were predominantly under foreign ownership at the time of formulation of these land reforms were pointed out as issues related to foreign exchange and relations. At the time of formulation of land reforms in Kerala the demand for nationalizing them and fragmenting them had come up. In this period of MNCs and Agribusiness when it is impossible to legally concentrate and hold beyond 15 or 50 standard acres as stipulated in the land ceiling acts, if the PP author and similar trends are talking about 'capitalist development' in the agrarian sector

it is not basically different from the stand of SUCI's, which may even embrace the latter's argument that India is imperialist!

Land Ceiling: New Imperialist Moves

Presently certain moves which the 'Narodnism' of PP cannot explain but which may make PP extremely happy are taking place for removing the obstacles for the 'capitalist development' in the agrarian sector. As the globalization of capital has intensified and the Agribusiness has become a saviour for the moribund imperialism, in order to facilitate the entry of Agribusiness MNCs to India and to integrate Indian agrarian sector with international market system, imperialists have called for removing the land ceiling conditions. Following Karnataka other states have initiated such moves. International capital is not ready for Narasimha Rao or Mooppanar type underground benami capitalist development. Indian agrarian capitalism may be going to develop in the path of old plantations of the colonial period, but in new forms. Perhaps PP may scholastically quote from Capital to justify this also as independent capitalist development rejecting the fact that it is taking under neo-colonial domination.

This debate is not going to end here. We all know that global statistics show that except in sub Saharan Africa and countries like India the agrarian population has gone down considerably. In the Latin American countries which are classical examples of neo-colonies the agrarian population is very small. If the speed with which urbanization is taking place and other factors in India are considered, there are no general theories which are going to prevent this country also going along that path. All these developments show that without evaluating and understanding capitalism, capitalist imperialist system and especially neocolonialism of the present phase, it is impossible to analyse and understand not only the present day global developments but also the developments in our own country.

About corporate nationality the international economic agencies are discussing for some years now. It simply means that the international corporations should be given national security all over the world. In the Singapore conference of WTO, efforts to implement it are already initiated. The possibilities for taking away all land ceilings, opening the country for Pepsi nationality and Nestle nationality, and inaugurating uninterrupted capitalist path for Indian agricultural sector under present ruling class dispensation cannot be negated. But in spite of all these, one thing can be categorically stated. Any amount of absurd theories which are presented with the backing of volumes of statistics and 'Marxist' quotations without understanding the concrete changes taking place around us all over the world are not going to lead the Marxist-Leninists an inch forward except to the condition of the frogs in the well. Such scholasticism will only enhance the misery and frustration of the vast masses who are deprived of everything under this global imperialist system.

Is Indian state semi-colonial or neo-colonial?

Vijay Kumar

PRESENTLY when the international Communist movement is passing through a period of severe set-back and the Marxist-Leninists all over the world are engaged in a critical struggle to overcome it and to create a new leap forward, polemics at all levels contributing to the development of revolutionary understanding based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought according to the concrete conditions of today have vital importance. In this the revolutionary intellectuals have a vital role or play. As such it was with a lot of interest 'Towards understanding semi-feudal semi-colonial society by Mr. R. S. Rao was read. It was expected that he will contribute towards developing better understanding about the current debate regarding the characterization of the Indian state. But contrary to expectations it is found that this book is nothing but a collection of his articles which are not making even feeble efforts to go in to the debate regarding the concept of semi-colonialism from the standpoint of political economy and history.

The author makes no effort to study the relation between imperialism and feudalism based on Lenin's great work Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. Instead, after repeatedly asserting that India is semi-feudal and semi-colonial according to 1970 Programme of CPI (ML), he is only trying to give supplementary proof to it through his random articles and papers. Unfortunately like many others he is not bothering to go through 1970 Programme itself carefully before stating that "CPI (ML) characterised the Indian society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial and the state as Landlord-Compradore-Bureaucratic capitalist" (P-123)

But what is the truth? Based on the assertion in the Great Debate that imperialism has replaced "colonialism with a more sinister and pernicious form of neocolonialism" Charu Majumdar had already mentioned in his Eight Documents that India is turned in to a neocolony. Following this direction, the 1970 Programme stated as follows:

"10. During these years of the sham independence the big compradore bureaucrat bourgeoisie and big landlord ruling classes have been serving their imperialist masters quite faithfully. These lackeys of imperialism, while preserving the old British imperialist exploitation, have also brought the US imperialist and Soviet social-imperialist exploiters to fleece our country.

11. They have mortgaged our country to the imperialist powers, mainly to

the US imperialists and Soviet social imperialists. With the weakening of the power of the British imperialism the world over, the Indian ruling classes have now hired themselves out to US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism. Thus, instead of two mountains, British imperialism and feudalism, the Indian people are now weighed down under four huge mountains, namely imperialism headed by US imperialism, Soviet social imperialism, feudalism, and comprador bureaucrat capital. Thus India has turned in to a neocolony of US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism.”

It is a fact that due to historical limitations neither CPC nor CPI (ML) at that time could develop this understanding about neocolony and neocolonialism. But they had seen the transformation of imperialism from colonial phase to neocolonial phase. And in the absence of necessary studies due to historical limitations and other causes, in the CPI (ML) programme along with this evaluation of Indian state as a neocolony, the society was defined as semi-colonial and semi-feudal. Even after evaluating Indian ruling classes including big landlords as lackeys of imperialism who have hired themselves out and are serving the interests of imperialist masters, and not in line with the correct understanding of agrarian revolution as the main content of the New Democratic Revolution, in practice it proceeded to counterposing of anti-feudal struggles to anti-imperialist struggles. In the absence of a correct understanding about imperialism in the then overall atmosphere of Lin Biaoist influence, it became the main ideological root of sectarianism prevalent in the movement then which contributed in a big way towards the severe setback suffered by the movement after a glorious beginning.

The 1972-77 period was one of numerous splits within CPI (ML) and of intensifying state repression. It was but natural that there was no serious effort during these years to amend the Programme even by those who talked much against sectarianism. But by 1977 with the revocation of internal emergency and Janatha Party coming to power at centre, large number of CPI (ML) cadres and leaders came out of jails and a comparatively more free atmosphere for even open polemics was created. It provided necessary conditions for ideological struggle and reorganization of the CPI (ML).

But the death of Mao Tsetung in 1976 and usurpation of power by the capitalist rulers in China through a military coup and their projection of ‘Three world Theory’ as the strategic line of the world proletariat created a new situation. According to TWT US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism had “*become the biggest international exploiters, oppressors and aggressors and the common enemies of the people of the world, and the rivalry between them is bound to lead to a new world war*” Their contention had “become the central problem in present day world politics”. Based on this evaluation diametrically opposed to earlier evaluations by CPC in the General Line document of 1963 and contrary to the global reality, TWT called for a broad

united front against the two superpowers, the First World. In that context it evaluated the Third World countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America “have shaken off or are freeing themselves from the fetters of colonialism “The colonial system has fallen apart at the seams” They have “won independence” (November 1, 1977 document of CPC leadership) Nowhere there are any mention of the comprador nature of the ruling classes in these countries. In short TWT was in total opposition to Mao’s teachings including the Great Debate documents.

Vast majority of the CPI (ML) groups in India, as their counterparts all over the world, refused to see the counter-revolutionary nature of the TWT. They started explaining India as politically independent, partially independent or as enjoying a large measure of political independence. So naturally any mention of India as neocolony or about neocolonialism became an anathema. So without giving any explanation to why they are deleting the word neocolony, all of them removed the word from their amended programmes and began to call India as a semi-colonial country. Semi-colonial word became useful to explain the condition of India state in the light of TWT as semi-independent or partially independent. Instead of this if any of these groups had come forward at that time with a polemic against the characterisation of India as neocolony, and against neocolonialism it would have contributed much towards a healthy ideological struggle.

When this book by R.S Rao was announced there was an expectation that he will atleast belatedly initiate a polemic on this vital issue. Instead he has also repeated the unhealthy practice of distorting 1970 programme’s evaluation of Indian state in the very same way as some CPI (ML) groups continue to do even today. As a result, even after all that is happening around us and oblivious of them he concludes that “the leadership of society is with the feudal lords in alliance with the agents of imperialist capital, namely the compradore and bureaucratic capital” Many others like him see that in the relation between feudalism and imperialism, the former dominates the latter contrary to objective historical reality often explained by Mao. According to Rao “ it becomes necessary for capital to become subordinate to the existing pre-capitalist formations, with a compromise” (p-75) Again “the national independence struggles like the one in India are struggles by capitalism to have a national base and the Islamic or Hindu or other forms of fundamentalism are struggles by the pre-capitalist formations for a base’ (p.76) . Once again “the compromises which imperialism has to make with the ruling feudals in order to rule the colony lends the reactionary content to capitalism” (P-86) One can only hope that atleast Rao had read what Marx wrote about India and colonization in general that capitalism is trying to recreate the colonies in its own image. As a result even after so much of developments in the last three decades Rao is contented by mechanically repeating that the contradiction between feudalism

and the broad masses is the principal one without bothering to analyse the relation between imperialism and feudalism and the changes taking place in semi-feudal relations with the penetration of imperialist capital, and that its resolution will resolve all other major contradictions (P-125). The analysis of decolonisation by him (P-150) sums up how mechanical is his semi colonial understanding.

It is unfortunate that even from “the perspective of political economy” he has not tried to explain the differences in the mode of exploitation of imperialism in the countries it subordinated in the earlier colonial period and presently. As such Mr. Rao’s book does not help us in any way to understand about imperialism, and the new forms of plunder it has initiated in the post-Second World War period, and to see whether characterization of India as a semi-colony is correct. We can only depend on the Marxist classics as the starting point in order to develop a polemic about the characterization of Indian state.

II

The history of colonization dates back to 15th century with the advent of mercantile capital. Colonisation process intensified with the so-called industrial revolution and emergence of powerful capitalist countries in the West. It was a very conscious effort as explained by Lenin in his ‘Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism’ in detail and earlier by Marx and Engels. This colonization of Asian, African, Latin American countries did not take place in a day. It was a process as explained in the case of China by Mao as follows “After the Opium War of 1840 China gradually changed in to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Since the incidence of September 18, 1931, when Japanese imperialists started their armed aggression, China has changed further in to a colonial, semi-colonial and semi feudal society” Further, “the emergence and development of capitalism is only one aspect of the change that has taken place since the imperialist penetration of China. There is another concomitant and obstructive aspect, namely, the collusion of imperialism with the Chinese feudal forces to arrest the development of Chinese capitalism.

“It is certainly not the purpose of the imperialist powers invading China to transform feudal China in to capitalist China. On the contrary, their purpose is to transform China in to their own semi-colony or colony” (Chinese Revolution and Chinese Communist Party)

This process of colonization and what is meant by semi-colony in that process is lucidly explained by Lenin as follows: As for the “semi-colonial” states, they provide an example of the transitional forms which are to be found in all spheres of nature and society. Finance capital is such a great, such decisive, you might say, force in all economic and in all international relations, that it is capable of subjecting and does subject, to itself even states enjoying the fullest

political independence; we shall shortly see examples of this. Ofcourse, finance capital finds most “convenient”, and derives the greatest profit from, a form of subjection which involves the loss of the political independence of the subjected countries and peoples. In this respect, the semi-colonial countries provide a typical example of the “middle stage” (Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism).

Lenin goes on to explain that imperialist countries not satisfied by the “middle stage” will go on trying for total colonization, total subjection, that is transformation in to a colony wherever possible as “colonial possession alone gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle against competitors, including the case of the adversary wanting to be protected by a law establishing a state monopoly. The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies” (ibid)

Once this process of colonization and its basic laws dividing the world in to a handful of imperialist countries and vast number of colonies and semi colonies during the period upto Second World War as explained by Marxist teachers and Comintern is understood, it is not at all difficult to understand why China was a semi-colony or remained in a transitional form or middle stage, and why India became a colony. As Mao wrote, imperialist intention was to transform China in to their own colony. But due to imperialist balance of forces at play in East Asia then and due to concrete conditions in China, it could not be totally colonized, it remained a semi-colony. Even after Japanese aggression it remained partly colonial and partly semi-colonial. Semi-colonial China under the rule of warlords but controlled by imperialists.

Imperialist aggression in India also started almost in the same way. Initially the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British were contending for their colonial hegemony with their own occupied territories and areas of influence. Till the 1857 First War of Independence India was also a semi-colony, at a middle-stage. If the feudal forces and others aligned to them could win this war or atleast arrive at a treaty like the one the imperialists signed with Chinese emperor in 1840 after Opium War, India would have continued as a semi-colony like China. But British imperialists who had already defeated their imperialist contenders unlike in China, decisively won the 1857 war and went on to fully colonise the country.

Thus, as far as the Marxist teachers are concerned, semi-colony is nothing but a transitional form, a middle stage in the process of colonization. Both colonies and semi-colonies belong to the same historical and political category, both countries under colonization. Characterization of any countries, states or societies in the post-Second World War period, especially after the

decolonization process was completed as semi-colonial goes basically against what Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Comintern have explained vividly in the first half of this century during the mighty advance of the ICM.

To call present Indian state as semi-colony is quite contrary to reality. Post-1947 India has very little in common with the pre-revolutionary Chinese state as far as the existence of vast colonial possessions under different imperialist powers and the new methods of plunder are concerned. It is the responsibility of the Marxist-Leninists to struggle uncompromisingly against the characterization of India as a semi-colony because this goes against the vast changes taken place in the post Second World War period and refuses to recognize the newer forms of plunder developed by imperialism. This characterization makes us incapable of understanding the main enemy, imperialism, in this era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, and to develop our strategy and tactics, both internally and globally.

In the pre-Second World War period, in the context of a correct understanding about imperialism, even in the case of semi colonial country like China Mao said in 1939 “The contradiction between imperialism and the Chinese nation and the contradiction between feudalism and the great masses of the people are the basic contradictions in modern Chinese society. Ofcourse, there are others, such as the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the contradiction within the reactionary ruling classes themselves. But the contradiction between imperialism and the Chinese nation is the principal one” Again asking what are the chief targets or enemies at this stage of Chinese revolution” Mao answers that they are imperialism and feudalism. The two collude with each other in oppressing the Chinese people, and imperialism is the foremost and most ferocious enemy of the Chinese people” (ibid). Thus, Mao has explicitly made clear what is a semi-colony, what are the targets of revolution in such a country, and what is the principal target. Mao always put imperialism as the principal target and correctly linked anti-feudal and all other struggles with the anti-imperialist struggles.

But even today, even after severe setback to the ICM, many Marxist-Leninist organizations and revolutionary intellectuals directly or indirectly linked to them refuse to go in to the ideological roots of this setback manifested through an erroneous understanding about imperialism in the post-Second World War period. They mechanically repeat India as a semi-colony. While claiming to do it in Mao’s name, in determining the principal target, and in linking all other struggles with anti-imperialist struggles they go against Mao’s theory and practice. It is doing incalculable damage to the revolutionary movement. It is in this context opposing the characterization of post 1947 Indian state as semi-colonial, and all other erroneous evaluations attached to it become very significant.

III

Lenin explained the basic features of imperialism as follows: “(1) The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life, (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a financial oligarchy (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed” Along with the first four features, the fifth feature, the territorial division of the whole world into colonies/semi-colonies which was the principal manner of subjection of oppressed countries by imperialism till Second World War period characterized the colonial phase of imperialism. Even in the semi-colonies as in China the imperialists were for total colonization as Japanese tried. As Lenin repeated imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed, and in which the division of the World among the international trusts has begun. Even during colonial phase US imperialism which had emerged as foremost economic power after First World War had initiated attempts for control through cartels and international trusts with occasional military interference, a method of control primarily through imperialist capital, in some of the Latin American countries and in Philippines. Thus though neocolonial form of plunder was introduced by US imperialism even before, in a World with British imperialism playing the leading role with its ‘empire where the sun never sets’ territorial division and colonial plunder remained the main trend during this phase.

But during the Second World War itself the situation started changing. By 1944 two things were clear. One, that British imperialism has weakened and US imperialism is becoming the leader of imperialist camp in all respects. Two, the growing challenge of socialist camp and national liberation movements. In this situation, by 1944 itself US imperialism chalked out its strategy for its world domination as well as to face the socialist threat. Starting from ‘Brettonwood Agreement’ and creation of IMF, World Bank and GATT trio it proceeded to initiate formation of UN as its political tool, military alliances like NATO, Truman doctrine with authority to interfere in any country etc. Along with these it promoted a speedy ‘decolonisation process’ through which it could enter and control all the hitherto colonies/semi-colonies with its imperialist capital and Brettonwood trios on the one hand, and on the other hand by transferring power to the comprador classes in these countries a façade of independence was created to cheat the people and to degenerate the

revolutionary forces. In this neocolonial phase direct territorial domination ceased to become the main form of subjection.

This decolonization was the most cleverly worked out spearhead of US imperialist offensive for World domination and to challenge the socialist advance. It is in understanding this the revolutionary forces most grievously erred.. Instead of evaluating decolonization as the most important aspect of counter-revolutionary imperialist offensive, socialist countries as well as revolutionary forces started calling these decolonized countries, that is countries in which power was transformed to comprador classes, as newly independent countries, politically independent countries etc, or as semi-colonies based on these understandings, quite contrary to the understanding Mao had put forward about China as a semi-colony in its pre-revolutionary period. The erroneous understanding about non-aligned movement (NAM), the initiative for Bandung Conference, Panchasheel etc. were products of this erroneous evaluation. Krushchovian revisionism theorized it in to the 'theory of three peacefuls' and non-capitalist path of development, and brought havoc to the ICM.

As CPC evaluated a decade later in the Great Debate documents "the wolf has left by the front door but the tiger has entered through the back door, the old colonialism being replaced by the new, more powerful and more dangerous US imperialism. The peoples of Asia and Africa are seriously menaced by the tentacles of neocolonialism represented by US imperialism" Again it reiterated "the US is most energetic and cunning in promoting neo colonialism With this weapon US imperialists are trying to grab the colonies and spheres of influence of other imperialists and to establish world domination. This neo colonialism is a more pernicious and sinister form of colonialism"

But the 1957 Moscow declaration of the Communist parties of socialist countries had already brought serious damage to the movement by evaluating that: "The position of imperialism has been greatly weakened as a result of the disintegration of the colonial system. The countries that have shaken off the yoke of colonialism are defending their sovereignty and fighting for economic independence, for international peace." This erroneous position was repeated in the 1960 Moscow Statement of the 80 parties also: " A new historical period has set in the life of mankind. The peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America that have won their freedom have begun to take an active part in world politics. The complete collapse of colonialism is imminent."

The facts were clear. After Second World War imperialists were certainly not giving up colonialism. Under the façade of decolonization they were merely adopting a new form, neocolonialism. As result with the completion of the imperialist sponsored decolonization process, world was divided in to a handful of imperialist countries headed by US imperialism and a vast number of neocolonies under different stage of neocolonisation. The refusal to accept this

fact from the early 1950s made the ICM unarmed before an all out imperialist offensive and led to grievous losses to world people. Though the ICM could retrieve its position partly under the new revolutionary counter offensive unleashed by Mao in the 1960s, through Great Debate and GPCR once again paved the way for a revolutionary upsurge, under the influence of Lin Biaoism ICM suffered yet another setback. Once again, when the movement could be retrieved partly in the first half of 1970s with the anti-imperialist struggles in Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos inspiring world people, following Mao's death , usurpation of power by capitalist roaders in China, and degeneration of Albania dealt another severe blow to ICM.

When we look back to these developments in the fifties, sixties and seventies and evaluate them it can be seen that the root cause of these set backs was the weakness of the ICM in understanding imperialism in its neocolonial phase when world was divided in to a handful of imperialist countries and a vast number of neocolonies, and in developing its strategy and tactics accordingly. This weakness was utilized by revisionist elements within to degenerate the Communist parties and socialist states to capitalist path by usurping power through military coups or other heinous methods with the overt and covert assistance and prompting from imperialists and their lackeys in different countries. As Lenin and later Mao had repeatedly warned even after revolutionary capture of political power, since it takes a very long time to arm the people ideologically and to create socialist consciousness among them, making them capable of defending the people's political power, it is easy for unscrupulous revisionist elements to worm in to leadership positions unsuspectingly if the whole party and its revolutionary leadership are not remaining always alert to all machinations of imperialism and are not ideologically equipped always to combat this principal enemy often acting through its compradors.

Presently we are passing through a very critical period. One century is in its closing years and a new century is dawning shortly. In spite of the repeated and severe setbacks suffered by the ICM, the Marxist-Leninists in all countries all over the World have started regrouping and reorganising once again. In a number of countries the revolutionary struggles are continuing. Anti-imperialist sentiments are rising among World people. They are coming up repeatedly in different forms Thus the objective situation is becoming ripe for a new mighty offensive by the proletarian revolutionary forces everywhere.

These possibilities can be turned in to reality and the next offensive can be made a historic one capable of overthrowing imperialism for ever at the global level itself, only if we take positive and negative lessons from the past and take correct ideological political-organisational positions based on the teachings of Marxism - Leninism - Mao Tsetung Thought. It is in this context the cardinal importance of correctly understanding the real imperialist intentions

behind the decolonization process transforming imperialist plunder from its colonial phase to neocolonial phase from the last years of Second World War should be repeatedly stressed. When we look back now with the experience we have gained from the developments during the last half a century it is not difficult to understand that if the leaderships of ICM, the socialist states, and communist parties in different countries then had taken a better understanding about the neocolonial offensive by imperialism dividing the imperialist World in to a handful of imperialist states and large number of neocolonies through decolonization, later advent of Krushchovian revisionism and erroneous evaluations about so called disintegration of colonial system, the severe damage to ICM could be prevented. It is the beginning of such an evaluation in the sixties gave rise to the Great Debate by CPC led by Mao Tsetung, and to Charu Majumdar's efforts to apply Marxism-Leninism Mao Tsetung Thought in our country. This led to CPI (ML) formation and 1970 programme which gave a basically correct analysis of the post – 1947 Indian state, stage of revolution, major contradictions and the strategic approach to the NDR.

It is the responsibility of the Marxist-Leninists and revolutionary intellectuals to further develop these positions taking in to account the better experiences of the last three decades. Instead of that if anybody is trying to impose a 'semi-colonial understanding' as the omnipotent truth, a fait accompli, we have to boldly say that they have not learned from history, their knowledge of political economy is eclectic. A real polemic should start on this cardinal question of characterization of Indian state as the whole development of strategy and tactics of the NDR hinges on it, and as it has international significance also.

Taking lessons from past mistakes and fighting uncompromisingly against Krushchovite, Lin Biaoist, Dengist influences, we have to accept the reality that in the post-Second World War period imperialism has launched a most sinister and pernicious neocolonial offensive starting with decolonization, and the World today is divided in to a handful of imperialist countries and a vast number of neocolonies. We should develop the position put forward in 1970 programme that India was transformed to a neocolony through 1947 transfer of power, and develop our strategy and tactics based on it. Only in this way we shall be able to combat liberalism of all sorts, to take firm position against imperialism and its compradors, and to lead NDR to victory as a part of World socialist revolution.