

# Historical Materialism

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## NOTE

A previous volume by the same author dealt with Materialism and the Dialectical Method. It was originally intended to have a second volume on Historical Materialism and the Theory of Knowledge. The present book, however, is devoted exclusively to Historical Materialism, and the Theory of Knowledge will be discussed in a third volume.

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*Part One***GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

## CHAPTER ONE

## SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

Socialism is the social ownership of means of production and their utilisation to satisfy the material and cultural requirements of the whole of society. Socialism is necessary because only by such a radical transformation of the economic basis of society can the evils resulting from capitalism be done away with, and new powerful techniques be fully utilised.

Socialism can be achieved only by means of the struggle of the working class, and only on condition that the mass working-class movement is equipped with scientific socialist theory.

Marx and Engels established the bases of this theory. The foundation of their teaching was their discovery of the laws of development of society, the laws of the class struggle.

*Capitalism and Socialism*

The idea of socialism arose and gripped men's minds in modern society because of discontent with the evils of capitalism, and the perception that only by a radical transformation of the entire economic basis of society could these evils be done away with.

In capitalist society the means of production—the land, factories, mills, mines, transport—belong to the capitalists, and production is carried on for capitalist profit. But the essence of socialism is that the means of production become social property, and that, on the basis of social ownership, production is carried on for the benefit and welfare of the whole of society.

From its very beginning, capitalism meant a previously undreamed of increase in the powers of producing wealth. But this wealth went to swell the profits of a few, while the mass of the working people were condemned to toil and poverty. To use the new powers of producing wealth, not to enrich the few but to

enrich the whole of society, is the aim of socialism.

Great new productive forces have been created in modern society—as witness the discoveries of science and the growth of industry. But it becomes yearly more evident that the capitalist owners and managers cannot direct the development and utilisation of these forces for the benefit of the majority of the people.

Today this is more evident than ever before.

The great capitalist monopolies of today subjugate everything to their drive for maximum profits, to secure which they step up the exploitation of the workers, ruin and impoverish the majority of the population, annex other countries and plunder their resources, militarise the national economy and prepare for and wage wars.

The newly discovered techniques of atomic energy production, for example, are not being developed and utilised by the capitalist powers for the benefit of the people. On the contrary, they are being developed to produce new weapons to intimidate rival capitalist powers and to try to overawe those peoples who have already rid themselves of capitalism.

Vast territories have been annexed by the capitalist powers as their colonies, and they have claimed to “develop” these territories. The peoples living in them, however, remain in conditions of incredible poverty.

Despite all the resources of science, capitalism is unable even to feed masses of people adequately. In the United States of America, the richest capitalist country in the world, “surplus” food is today going to waste, while about half the population of the United States remains undernourished. If the profit system fails even to distribute existing supplies, no wonder it fails to increase them to meet the needs of the hungry.

People have even come to fear new knowledge and high techniques, because they fear that the result of higher technique may only be crisis and unemployment, and that the result of more knowledge may only be the discovery of even more fearful weapons of destruction. The profit system has converted men’s highest achievements into threats to their livelihood and very existence. This is the final sign that that system has outlived its time, and must be replaced by another.

Socialism means that the vast resources of modern technique

are developed and utilised to meet the needs of the people. Production is not carried on for profit, but to satisfy the material and cultural requirements of society. And this is ensured because the means of production, all the means of creating wealth, are taken out of the control of a capitalist minority, whose concern is for capitalist profit, and come under the control of the working people themselves.

### *Socialist Theory and the Working-class Movement*

But in order to achieve socialism, we need something more than a general idea of socialism as a better order of society than capitalism. We need to understand what social forces must be organised and what opponents they will have to defeat.

The first conceptions of socialism were utopian in character. The first socialists conceived the vision of a better order of society; they gave it form and colour and proclaimed it far and wide. But it remained a mere vision. They could not say how to realise it in practice.

The utopians criticised the capitalist order of society as unreasonable and unjust. For them, socialism was based simply on reason and justice; and because they considered that the light of reason belonged equally to all men, they appealed to everyone equally—and first of all to the rulers of society, as being the most influential—to embrace the truth of socialism and put it into practice.

They contributed the first exposure and condemnation of capitalism, and the first vision of socialism—a society based on common ownership of the means of production—as the alternative to capitalism. But this vision was spun out of the heads of reformers. The utopians could not show the way to achieve socialism, because they had no conception of the laws of social change and could not point to the real social force capable of creating a new society.

That force is the working class. The capitalist class is bound to resist socialism, because the end of the profit system means the end of the capitalist class. For the working class, on the other hand, socialism means its emancipation from exploitation. Socialism means the end of poverty and unemployment. It means that workers work for themselves and not for the profit of others.

The achievement of socialism depends on the mobilisation of the working class in the fight for socialism, and on their overpowering the resistance of the capitalist class. And in this struggle the working class must seek to unite with itself all those sections—and together they constitute the majority of society—whose interests are infringed upon and who are impoverished and ruined by the greed for profits of the ruling capitalist minority.

But more than that. If socialism is to be won, if working-class emancipation from capitalism is to be achieved, then the working-class movement must become *conscious* of its socialist aim. But this consciousness does not arise of itself, it does not arise spontaneously. On the contrary, it requires the scientific working out of socialist theory, the introduction of this theory into the working-class movement, and the fight for it inside the movement.

The very conditions of life of the workers lead them to combine and organise to defend their standards of life from capitalist attack and to improve them. But the trade union struggle to defend and improve working-class standards does not get rid of capitalism. On the contrary, so long as working-class struggle limits itself to such purely economic aims, it seeks only to gain concessions from capitalism while continuing to accept the existence of the system. And the movement can pass beyond this phase of fighting for no more than reforms within capitalism, only when it equips itself with socialist theory. Only then can it become conscious of its long-term aim of getting rid of capitalism altogether, and work out the strategy and tactics of the class struggle for achieving that aim.

In the history of the working-class movement there have been leaders whose standpoint went no further than concern for winning concessions from capitalism. This outlook is the root of opportunism in the working-class movement—the tendency to seek merely temporary gains for different sections of the working class at the expense of the long-term interests of the whole class. The root of opportunism in the working-class movement consists in accepting the spontaneous struggle for reforms as the be all and end all of the movement.

If socialism is to be achieved, the working-class movement must not rely only on the spontaneous development of the mass



struggle for better conditions. It must equip itself with socialist theory, with the scientific understanding of capitalism and of the position of the different classes under capitalism, with the scientific understanding that the emancipation of the working class can be achieved only by uniting all forces for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

Hence without the guiding and organising force of scientific socialist theory, the working class cannot win victory over capitalism. The union of socialist theory with the mass working-class movement is a condition for the advance from capitalism to socialism.

### *The Marxist Science of Society*

The great contribution of Marxism was to develop scientific socialist theory and to introduce it into the working-class movement.

Marx and Engels based socialism on a scientific understanding of the laws of social development, of the class struggle. And so they were able to show how socialism was to be achieved, and to arm the working class with knowledge of its historical mission.

Marx did not arrive at his conclusions as a pure research worker, though he did conduct profound research. In the 1840's Marx was participating as a revolutionary democrat and republican in the movement which led up to the revolutionary year 1848. And he arrived at his conclusions as an active politician, striving to understand the movement in which he participated in order to guide it to the goal of the people's emancipation from oppression, superstition and exploitation.

These conclusions were formulated in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* which Marx wrote, in collaboration with Engels, in 1848.

They saw the whole social movement as a struggle between classes; they saw the contending classes themselves as products of the economic development of society; they saw politics as the reflection of the economic movement and of the class struggle; they saw that the bourgeois revolution then in progress, the task of which was to remove the vestiges of feudal rule and establish democracy, was preparing the way for the proletarian, socialist revolution; and they saw that this revolution could only be

achieved by the working class conquering political power.

It was only because they espoused the cause of the working class and saw in it the new, rising, transforming force in history, that Marx and Engels were able to discover the laws of social change, which those who adopted the standpoint of the exploiting classes could never do.

“Certain historical facts occurred which led to a decisive change in the conception of history,” wrote Engels. “In 1831 the first working-class rising had taken place at Lyons; between 1838 and 1848 the first national workers’ movement, that of the English Chartists, reached its height.

“The class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie came to the front... But the old idealist conception of history . . . knew nothing of class struggle based on material interests, in fact knew nothing at all of material interests. . . . The new facts made imperative a new examination of all past history.”

From this new situation, Engels continued, it became clear.

“That all past history was the history of class struggles; that these warring classes are always the product of the conditions of production and exchange, in a word, of the economic conditions of their time; that therefore the economic structure of society always forms the real basis from which, in the last analysis, is to be explained the whole superstructure of legal and political institutions, as well as of the religious, philosophical and other conceptions of each historical period.”<sup>1</sup>

From the recognition of the significance of the class struggle in capitalist society came the realisation that the class struggle was likewise waged in previous epochs and that, in fact, the whole of past history since the break-up of the primitive communes was the history of class struggles.

But on what was the class struggle based? On the clash of the material interests of the different classes. Realising this, the key to historical development as a whole had to be sought in the sphere of these material interests. The different classes with their different interests were seen to be “the product of the conditions of production and exchange”, of the economic conditions, prevailing in society.

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 2.

Marx pointed out that “in production men not only act on nature but also on one another. They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another, and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production, take place.”<sup>1</sup>

Marx and Engels discovered the key to understanding the whole development of society in the investigation of the development of economic conditions, of the conditions of production and exchange, and of the struggle between classes produced by these economic conditions.

Thus understanding the laws of historical development, Marx and Engels showed that socialism was not a utopian dream, but the inevitable outcome of the development of capitalist society and of the working-class struggle against capitalism. They taught the working class to be conscious of its own strength and of its own class interests, and to unite for a determined struggle against the capitalist class, rallying around itself all the forces discontented with capitalism. They showed that it was impossible to get rid of capitalism and establish socialism unless the working class conquered political power, deprived the capitalists of all power and stamped out their resistance. And they showed that in order to vanquish the old world and create a new, classless society, the working class must have its own party, which Marx and Engels called the Communist Party.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital*.

## CHAPTER TWO

## MATERIALISM AND THE SCIENCE OF SOCIETY

The first guiding principle of historical materialism is that change and development in society, as in nature, take place in accordance with objective laws.

What happens in society is brought about by the conscious activities of human individuals. But the outcome of this activity, and the conscious motives by which it is directed, are in the last analysis conditioned by the operation of laws of economic development which operate independently of the will of men.

Marx's discovery of the laws of social development arms the working-class movement with the scientific knowledge with the aid of which it can carry its struggle against capitalism through to the victory of socialism, and then build socialist society.

The Marxist concept of social laws is not fatalistic, but shows how people by their own efforts can and do change society. Nor does it deny the role of individual leaders, but shows that such leaders always represent and serve the interests of classes.

*The Materialist Conception of History*

The general theory of the motive forces and laws of social change, developed on the basis of Marx's discoveries, is known as the materialist conception of history, or historical materialism.

The materialist conception of history was arrived at by applying the materialist world outlook to the solution of social problems. And because he made this application, materialism was with Marx no longer simply a theory aimed at interpreting the world, but a guide to the practice of changing the world, of building a society without exploitation of man by man. Above all, historical materialism has a contemporary significance. It is always applicable here and now, at the present day. It leads to conclusions, not only about the causes of past events, but about the causes of events now taking place, and therefore about what to do, about what policy to fight for, in order to satisfy the requirements of the people.

It is precisely in this contemporary application that historical materialism demonstrates its scientific character. For, in the last analysis, the test of social science, as of all other science, can lie only in its practical application. If historical materialism makes history into a science, this is because the materialist conception of history is not only a theory about how to interpret history but also a theory about how to make history, and therefore the basis for the practical policy of the revolutionary class which is making history today.

The application of the materialist world outlook to social questions leads to three guiding principles, which historical materialism employs in the understanding of social affairs. They are:

(1) That society in its development is regulated by objective laws discoverable by science;

(2) That views and institutions, political, ideological and cultural developments, arise on the basis of the development of the material life of society;

(3) That ideas and institutions which thus arise on the basis of conditions of material life play an active role in the development of material life.

These guiding principles will be the subject of this and the next chapter.

#### *Social Processes Regulated by Objective Laws*

*The first guiding principle* resulting from the application of materialism to social questions is that change and development in society, as in nature, take place in accordance with objective laws. Social processes, like processes in nature, are regulated by objective laws.

Materialism maintains that the processes of nature always take place in accordance with laws which are discoverable and are characteristic of the processes and objects concerned. Materialism explains what takes place in the material world from the material world itself. It does not recognise inexplicable happenings, divine interventions or control of material events by non-material, supernatural agencies.

And so, because it understands human affairs as part of the material world and not as belonging to some other “higher” sphere of being, materialism does not recognise inexplicable

happenings, divine interventions or supernatural agencies in human affairs any more than it does in nature.

If the materialist standpoint is applied to social questions, it follows that we must seek to explain the movement of society, too, as taking place according to characteristic laws which are discoverable from the investigation of the processes of social life.

Consequently, for materialism, “social life, the history of society, ceases to be an agglomeration of ‘accidents’ and becomes the history of the development of society according to regular laws, and the study of the history of society becomes a science. . . . Hence the science of the history of society, despite all the complexity of the phenomena of social life, can become as precise a science as, let us say, biology, and capable of making use of the laws of development of society for practical purposes.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Materialist Conception of Objective Laws*

What in this context do we mean by “laws”? What exactly is the materialist conception of “laws”, whether it be laws of natural or of social processes?

Laws are expressions (usually only approximate) of objective regularities discoverable in events.

A law, such as the law of gravity, is a rule which has been formulated to express certain regular connections between phenomena, that is, regular connections between observed events, between observed features of things and processes.

These connections and regularities, which are expressed in the law, do not depend on ourselves. We can get to know them and express them in laws, and then we can take these laws into account in our practical activity. But the laws, in so far as they are objective and scientifically valid, express objective connections and regularities which operate independently of our consciousness and our will.

For example, the mutual attraction between bodies which is expressed in the law of gravity operates independently of our consciousness and of our will. It operates just the same, whether we observe it or not, and whether we like it or not. We have to adapt our actions to the law of gravity, since we cannot by any

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

possibility alter it.

And if social processes are regulated by laws, then the same must apply in society. There are regularities in social processes, and connections between social events, which are independent of our consciousness and will. Whether we notice them or not, whether we like them or not, they operate just the same.

If such regularities and connections exist in nature and in society, they exist because events do not take place, whether in nature or society, without a cause, and because causes once being set in train, their effects must follow. If, for example, certain events took place without causes, or if there was supernatural intervention in the course of events, or if similar causes failed to produce similar effects—then we could not say that events were regulated by laws. For in that case, the regularity and connection which is expressed in laws would not be present.

If, then, we say that society develops according to objective laws, then we mean (1) that social events take place only when the conditions causing such events have come into being. If, say, a movement starts up in which people put new social objectives before themselves, then that movement arises when and only when the conditions for it exist. It occurs at a definite time and in definite circumstances, and could not have occurred at another time and in other circumstances when its causes were not present.

So, for example, if we are considering the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire, we ought to seek for its causes in the conditions which had developed in Roman society at that particular time. And similarly, if we are considering the rise of rationalism and freethinking in modern Europe, once again we should seek its causes in the particular conditions of society which were coming into being in modern Europe. Neither in the one case nor the other should we seek for the explanation of the movement in some special illumination of men's minds taking place independently of the general movement of society.

We mean (2) that once certain events have taken place their effects will follow, independently of people's desires or intentions. Subsequent actions, subsequent events, may modify these effects, but cannot nullify them.

For example, the invention of the mariner's compass set in motion a whole train of effects which went far beyond what any-

one had intended or foreseen; so did the invention of the steam engine, the invention of the spinning jenny, and so on. Once such a train of effects is set in motion, it gives a direction to social events which cannot be reversed. It is the same in the political and ideological sphere. Men's political and ideological activities, coming to pass as products of definite social circumstances, lead to effects in accordance with those circumstances which may go far beyond and even be very different from what they foresaw or intended.

And we mean (3) that though circumstances are continually changing, and exactly the same circumstances never recur, nevertheless the same causal connections are discoverable in different sequences of events.

Thus the great social movements arising at different periods of history exemplify the same causal connections operating in different circumstances. If, for example, three hundred years ago there was a movement to get rid of feudalism, and today there is a movement to get rid of capitalism, these movements, different as they are, repeat the same process—they both arise because an existing social system has become a fetter upon economic development.

But it is one thing to say that social processes are regulated by laws and that therefore a science of society is possible. It is another thing to discover these laws, to lay bare the fundamental laws of change and development in society. How does Marxism approach this problem?

#### *Determining Factors in Social Development*

The development of society has unique features which distinguish social changes from natural events. The essential difference lies in the fact that society is composed of conscious human beings, from whose conscious activity everything that arises in society results.

“In one point the history of the development of society proves to be essentially different from that of nature,” wrote Engels. “In nature . . . there are only blind, unconscious agencies acting upon one another. . . . In the history society, on the other hand, the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite



goals; nothing happens without a conscious purpose, without an intended aim.”<sup>1</sup>

For this reason it has commonly been assumed that objective laws cannot be discovered in society as in nature. In nature, it is argued, everything is determined in accordance with natural law. But in society, what happens is determined by people’s conscious aims and intentions; and in this sphere there exists no such order and repetition as will admit of the discovery of objective laws regulating the sequence of events.

(1) Marxism, however, calls attention in the first place to the circumstances determining the *outcome* of people’s intended acts. People may intend anything they please, but what actually results from their actions may be something else, which they did not intend.

For example, in imposing bans on trade with the socialist world the rulers of the U.S.A. today intend to strangle the socialist countries. But this is not what actually results from their actions. On the contrary, the socialist countries continue to flourish despite the bans, and the chief outcome is to cause economic difficulties for the capitalist countries, and conflicts between the U.S.A. and its capitalist allies.

What, then, determines the outcome of people’s intended acts? Here is a sphere of the operation of objective laws independent of the will of men.

(2) Marxism calls attention in the second place to the circumstances which give rise to the formation of aims and intentions in people’s minds. When people form intentions and place various aims before themselves, they do this in response to the varying circumstances in which they find themselves. Different people have different aims, and different aims are formulated at different times. This does not express merely the fact that individual psychologies differ, but it expresses the fact that people find themselves in different circumstances, with different interests arising from those circumstances. It is these differences which, in the last analysis, give rise to their different aims.

For example, if at the present time some people set themselves the aim of fomenting wars, while others try to keep the

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, ch. 4.

peace, this is not primarily because some people have an aggressive turn of mind while others are more friendly and peaceable, but because, in present circumstances, there are some people whose interests are served by heightening international tensions while the interests of others are served by resolving international tensions.

If, then, we take into account the development of the circumstances under which people form their different aims and of the interests which these aims express, here again is a sphere of the operation of objective laws independent of the will of men.

Dealing with this problem, Engels pointed out (1) that while nothing happens without an intended aim, what actually takes place has, in the long run, seldom been the same as what was aimed at.

“That which is willed happens but rarely. In the majority of instances the numerous desired ends cross and conflict with one another, or these ends themselves are from the outset incapable of realisation, or the means of attaining them are insufficient. Thus the conflict of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produces a state of affairs entirely analogous to that in the realm of unconscious nature. The ends of the actions are intended, but the results which actually follow from these actions are not intended; or when they do seem to correspond to the ends intended, they ultimately have consequences quite other than those intended.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, while history is made by men’s conscious activities, yet we cannot find the explanation of what results from men’s activities in the will or intentions of the people taking part in these events. For “the many individual wills active in history for the most part produce results quite other than those they intended—often quite the opposite.”<sup>2</sup>

And so Engels concluded (2) that “their motives in relation to the total result are likewise of only secondary significance.... The further question arises: what driving forces in turn stand behind these motives? What are the historical causes which transform

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

themselves into motives in the brains of the actors?"<sup>1</sup>

Looking, then, for the circumstances which give rise to the formation of aims and intentions in people's minds and which determine the final outcome of their social activity, Marxism discovers these in the development of the material life of society—in the sphere of economic development, in the development of production and of the conditions of production and exchange.

The capitalist system as it exists today, for example, could only develop as a result of the destruction of the former feudal social relations and feudal institutions, and this revolution was made by people who rallied behind such aims as "liberty, equality, fraternity". From the position which they occupied within the economic structure of feudal society, the peasants, the town workers and the rising bourgeoisie were all frustrated in the pursuit of their material interests, and all consequently oppressed, under feudal rule. That is why they arose to fight for liberty, and it was this which was expressed in their aim of liberty. By their actions the feudal fetters were smashed. But what then resulted was something not intended by the majority of those taking part in the revolution. For as soon as the feudal fetters were smashed, free scope was afforded to the development of the economic activity of the bourgeoisie and so the laws of economic development, independent of whether anyone intended it, led to the development of capitalism. Thus capitalism developed in accordance with social laws of which most of the people whose actions forwarded that development were quite unaware.

Marxism concludes, therefore, that while society is composed of individuals who together make their own history by their own conscious activity, yet we must look behind people's conscious aims, intentions and motives to the economic development of society and the class struggle in order to find the laws of historical development. It is there that we discover the laws which regulate the changes in the circumstances conditioning people's actions, the transformation of material interests into conscious motives in their heads, and the final outcome of their activity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

*Laws of Economic Development*

The materialist conception that change and development in society, as in nature, are regulated by objective laws, leads then to the conclusion that the fundamental laws regulating change and development in society are economic in character. In other words, the fundamental laws of society are the laws governing the development of production, the conditions of production and exchange, the rise of classes and class relationships, and the class struggle.

Regulating the development of the conditions of material life of society, these fundamental laws of social development operate behind people's backs, as it were, without them being aware of it. Their operation leads to the coming about of definite circumstances which then condition people's conscious outlook and motives of action, and determine, independently of their intentions, the actual outcome of their actions.

But then what follows, if once people do become aware of these laws, do get to know and understand them?

If once people come to understand that the real possibilities of social action are conditioned by material circumstances and material interests, if once they come to understand by what laws the outcome of their social activities is governed, it follows that they can then consciously and deliberately shape their course in accordance with the real possibilities of the situation, and can adapt their associated actions to the real material circumstances and laws of their social existence.

Like all major scientific discoveries, therefore the discovery of the laws of development of society is a great liberating fact, creating new powers and potentialities of social action. For it points the way to the future utilisation of these laws for securing the satisfaction of the basic requirements of men in society. If we understand the laws of historical development, then we can begin to make history in a new way—consciously basing our policy on the recognition of historical necessity, framing our policies in accordance with the real requirements of the majority of society, and so setting ourselves realisable objectives which accord with real social needs, and finding the way to attain them.

Such is the use to which the working-class movement can and must put the discoveries of Marxism. As we have seen, it was

precisely the need of the rising working-class struggle for socialism which created the conditions for the discovery by Marx of the laws of development of society. Armed with scientific knowledge of the laws of development of society, the working-class movement can carry its struggle against capitalism through to the victory of socialism, and then lead the way in building socialist society in which exploitation of man by man is abolished and the whole of social development serves the aim of satisfying the ever-rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society.

*Is Marxism Fatalist?*

The materialist conception that society develops according to objective laws is often held to imply some form of “fatalism” — that what will happen is always “fated” and that what we can do makes no difference to the outcome. In the light of what has been said, however, it should now be clear that Marxism implies the opposite.

There have been, and there are, fatalist theories of history. But these are idealist theories. Marxism is opposed to them, and they are opposed to Marxism.

Such, for example, are the theories which see in history the working out and realisation of some sort of divine plan—like Hegel’s philosophy of history, which sees the whole historical development of society as the realisation stage by stage of the so-called Absolute Idea.

Such, too, are the various theories which see history as moving through “cycles”, every civilisation passing by some inescapable necessity through the cycle of rise, plenitude of power and decline—as in Spengler’s *Decline of the West* or Toynbee’s *Studies in History*.

The idealism of such theories lies in the fact that they see the laws of development of society as a “fate” imposed upon society from outside, so that men and women are mere instruments of fate, the tools of an external necessity. If such theories are accepted, then we are indeed driven to fatalism. If what takes place is in the hands of God, or is decreed by fate, or follows by some iron necessity—it makes little difference in practice which you say—then it follows that there is indeed little we can do to deter-

mine our own destinies for ourselves.

For Marxism, on the other hand, men make their own history. Materialism can recognise no divine plan, no fate, no external necessity determining historical events. The events are determined wholly and entirely by men's own actions in the historical circumstances in which men find themselves.

"Men make their own history," wrote Marx, "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>1</sup>

This is the objective condition and limitation of men's historical activities. But these "circumstances given and transmitted from the past" were themselves made by men. If, then, we can come to know the economic and class forces which men themselves create in their historical activity, and the laws of their operation, then we can know what can be achieved and what must be done to achieve it. Far from leading to fatalistic inaction, therefore, the materialist conception of history leads to a programme of action.

Certainly, such a programme of action, based on scientific knowledge of laws of social development, is not possible for a reactionary class. It is such classes, indeed, which tend to cook up fatalist theories of history. They are capable of action, and of very vigorous action; but it is guided by their perception of their own narrow class interests and their wide experience of defending and advancing those interests—not by any scientific understanding of fundamental laws of social development, which they are concerned to resist, and understanding of which they therefore resist too. Such understanding can be achieved only by the progressive class, which eventually is able to utilise the laws of social development for overthrowing the old system of society and establishing a new one.

For the working people today, historical materialism tells them that by their own efforts, and by their own efforts alone, they can attain power and find the way to happiness and plenty. "The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ch. 1.

the working classes themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Individuals and Classes*

While Marxism is opposed to “fatalist theories of history, it is equally opposed to theories which make social development depend on nothing but a series of accidents. Such theories see no laws of development operating in society, but regard events as determined by unpredictable circumstances. Those who hold such views commonly attribute the decisive role in history to exceptional individuals, whose influence or force of will brings it about that events follow one course rather than another.

How, then, does Marxism regard the role played by exceptional individuals in history? If it denies that the course of history can in the long run be determined by the accidental characteristics of individuals, does it deny that certain individuals do play an exceptionally important part in shaping the course of events?

Marxism does not deny the role played in history by exceptional individuals. It does not deny the influence which such individuals have on the course of events. Nevertheless, historical development is not determined by exceptional individuals but by the movement of classes, and the exceptional individuals play their role only as representatives or leaders of classes. Unless the individual bases his authority and his influence upon the support of some class, whose interests and tendencies he represents, he is impotent and can exert no decisive influence. On the other hand, movements require leaders; and when classes are in movement they require to find and do find the individuals who can act as their representatives and leaders. These may be good leaders or bad, leaders of genius or second-rate leaders. In the former case the movement is accelerated and in the latter case retarded. But in any case, and in the long run, the course of history is not determined by the accidental characteristics of leading individuals, but by the movement of classes, of masses of people.

“When it is a question of investigating the driving powers which... lie behind the motives of men who act in history,” wrote Engels, “...then it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Rules of the International Working Men’s Association*.

set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of the people in each people. To ascertain the driving causes which are reflected as conscious motive in the minds of acting masses and their leaders the so-called great men . . . that is the only path which can put us on the track of the laws holding sway both in history as a whole, and at particular periods in particular lands.<sup>1</sup>

The working class today, therefore, must rely for its emancipation on its own class action. It must not accept leaders on their own valuation, but must judge its leaders by their actions and keep a check on their activities through its mass organisations. For the leaders of the movement are effective only in so far as they faithfully serve the class, remain close to the people and show the way forward based on scientific understanding.

“We may take it as a rule,” wrote Stalin, “that as long as the Bolsheviks maintain connection with the broad masses of the people they will be invincible. And, on the contrary, as soon as the Bolsheviks sever themselves from the masses and lose their connection with them, as soon as they become covered with bureaucratic rust, they will lose all their strength and become a mere cypher. . . . In the mythology of the ancient Greeks there was a celebrated hero, Antaeus.... Wherein lay his strength? It lay in the fact that every time he was hard pressed in a fight with an adversary he would touch the earth, the mother who had given birth to him and suckled him, and that gave him new strength.... I think that the Bolsheviks remind us of the hero of Greek mythology, Antaeus. They, like Antaeus, are strong because they maintain connection with their mother, the masses, who gave birth to them, suckled them and reared them, and as long as they maintain connection with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible.”<sup>2</sup>

Marxism, then, shows scientifically the way to win socialism. It proves scientifically that the victory of the working class and the downfall of capitalism are alike inevitable. But this is not brought about by any preordained fate, nor by the will of a few individuals, but by the conscious activity of millions of men and

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *History of C.P.S.U, Conclusion.*



women united in the working-class movement, and led by a party and by leaders who base their leadership on scientific understanding, on collective discussion and criticism and faithfulness to the interests of the people.

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE ROLE OF IDEAS IN SOCIAL LIFE

The second guiding principle of historical materialism is that social ideas arise out of the conditions of material life of society.

But ideas arising from conditions of material life of society then play an active role in the development of material life. This is the third guiding principle.

Ideas either promote or hinder social development. Old ideas, corresponding to conditions already outmoded, always tend to survive even after the conditions which gave rise to them are past. Such ideas are championed by the reactionary classes. But the new, rising social forces need to equip themselves with new ideas, which correspond to what is new and rising in the development of the material life of society. Such new ideas play a tremendous organising and mobilising role in the struggle to transform society.

Historical materialism teaches that the working class today needs (1) to base its practical policy on the objective laws of social development, (2) to base its programme on the real needs of the material development of society, and (3) to equip itself with revolutionary ideas, revolutionary theory.

*The Material Life of Society determines its Views and Institutions*

*The second guiding principle* of historical materialism is, that the views current in society, together with the institutions of society, are always in the last analysis determined by the conditions of material life.

In other words, the application of materialism to social questions leads to the conclusion that the material life of society determines its spiritual life.

For materialism, matter or the material world is primary, while mind or thought is secondary and derivative. The existence and inter-relationship of material things does not depend on our ideas of them, but on the contrary, our minds and the ideas in our minds depend on the prior existence and inter-relation of material

things.

Applied to society, this means that the origin of all the views current in society lies in the conditions of material life of society, and not the other way about.

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being,” wrote Marx, “but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.”<sup>1</sup>

“The material life of society is an objective reality existing independently of the will of men, while the spiritual life of society is a reflection of this objective reality,” wrote Stalin, explaining Marx’s standpoint. “. . . Hence the source of formation of the spiritual life of society, the origin of social ideas, social theories, political views and political institutions should not be sought in the ideas, theories, views and political institutions themselves, but in the conditions of the material life of society, of which these ideas, theories, views, etc., are the reflection.”<sup>2</sup>

This is the very opposite of what is usually taught. And it implies in turn that the ultimate causes of historical events are not to be found in the changes in men’s ideas, but in the changes in the conditions of material life.

“The whole previous view of history was based on the conception that the ultimate causes of all historical changes are to be looked for in the changing ideas of human beings,” wrote Engels. “. . . But the question was not asked as to whence the ideas come into men’s minds. . . . The ideas of each historical period are most simply to be explained from the economic conditions of life and from the social and political relations of the period, which are in turn determined by these economic conditions.”<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, “the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men’s brains, not in men’s better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. . . . The growing perception that existing social institutions are unreasonable and unjust, that reason has become unreason and right wrong, is only

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

<sup>3</sup> Engels, *Karl Marx*.

proof that in the modes of production and exchange changes have silently taken place, with which the social order, adapted to earlier economic conditions, is no longer in keeping.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us take an example.

It is often supposed that our forefathers overthrew the former feudal relations of subordination because the idea was born in their minds that men were equal and should enjoy equality of rights. But why should this idea have suddenly become so influential? Why should the feudal relations of subordination, which for centuries had been held to be just and reasonable, suddenly begin to appear unjust and unreasonable? Those questions lead us from the sphere of ideas to the sphere of the conditions of material life. It was because material, economic conditions were changing that people began to think in a new way. The existing feudal relations were no longer in keeping with developing economic conditions. It was the development of economic activity and economic relations which created the forces which overthrew feudalism and laid the foundations for capitalism. And so the rise and spread of the idea of equality of rights, as opposed to feudal inequality, followed upon and reflected the changes in material conditions of life.

Again, why should the idea of socialism, the idea of social ownership of means of production, have suddenly grown influential once capitalism was under way? For centuries private property had been regarded as just and reasonable, and even as the necessary basis for civilised society. But now, on the contrary, it began to appear unjust, unreasonable, oppressive. Once more, this new way of thinking, and the profound influence which socialist ideas began to exert, arose from new economic conditions. Under capitalism production was ceasing to be an individual matter and becoming a social matter, and private property and private appropriation based on private property were no longer in keeping with the new character of production.

In general, the rise of new ideas can never be regarded as a sufficient explanation of social changes, since the origin of ideas and the source of their social influence must always itself be explained. And this explanation is in the last analysis to be sought

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.

in the conditions of material life of society.

We shall find accordingly that corresponding to the different conditions of material life of society at different periods quite different ideas are current, and that the differences in the views of different classes in different periods are always in the last analysis to be explained in terms of the differences in conditions of material life.

“Does it require deep intuition,” asked Marx and Engels, “to comprehend that man’s ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man’s consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?”<sup>1</sup>

“If at different times men were imbued with different ideas and desires,” wrote Stalin, “the reason for this is that at different times men fought nature in different ways to satisfy their needs, and, accordingly, their economic relations assumed different forms. There was a time when men fought nature collectively, on the basis of primitive communism; at that time their property was communist property and, therefore, at that time they drew scarcely any distinction between ‘mine’ and ‘thine’, their consciousness was communistic. There came a time when the distinction between ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ penetrated the process of production; at that time property, too, assumed a private, individualist character, and therefore, the consciousness of men became imbued with the sense of private property. Then came a time, the present time, when production is again assuming a social character and, consequently, property too will soon assume a social character—and this is precisely why the consciousness of men is gradually becoming imbued with socialism. . . . First the material conditions change, and then the ideas of men, their habits, customs and their world outlook change accordingly.”<sup>2</sup>

The laws of social development, to the economic aspect of which we have already referred, have, therefore, this further aspect—that they include the laws whereby on the basis of the given material or economic conditions of society there arises a whole superstructure of social views and corresponding institu-

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *Anarchism or Socialism*, ch. 2.

tions.

The economic structure of society always constitutes the basis on which the views and institutions of society arise and to which they correspond. The rise of new views and new institutions always reflects the fact that economic conditions are changing.

Thus “in different periods of the history of society different social ideas, theories, views and political institutions are to be observed. . . . Under the slave system we encounter certain social ideas, theories, views and political institutions, under feudalism others, and under capitalism others still. . . . Whatever are the conditions of material life of society, such are the ideas, theories, political views and political institutions of that society.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Active Role of Ideas in Social Development*

Materialism teaches that the ideas which are formed in men’s minds depend upon the prior existence of material things and material relationships. But this does not mean that, having arisen on the basis of material conditions, ideas play no part in the social activity whereby material conditions are changed. On the contrary, having arisen on the basis of material conditions, ideas become an active force reacting back upon material conditions.

We must distinguish, therefore, the question of the *origin* of ideas from the question of their *significance* and *social role*.

*The third guiding principle* of historical materialism deals with the role which ideas play in social development. It states that ideas which arise on the basis of conditions of material life of society themselves play an active role in the development of the material life of society.

Some types of mechanistic materialism stress only that ideas are called forth by external material conditions. But having said that, the mechanists pay no more attention to the further active relationships which arise between ideas and the material conditions which called them forth. Dialectical materialism, on the other hand, which is concerned to study things in their complex inter-relationships and in their real movement, must take into account also the ways in which ideas react back upon the material

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

conditions, and the role which ideas play in the total complex movement of society.

Let us consider, for example, a skilled workman engaged in production. He is not an automaton. He possesses knowledge, that is to say, ideas, about the materials of his trade. These ideas have not come into his mind from nowhere. A carpenter has ideas about the properties of wood, and a toolmaker has ideas about the properties of metal, and his ideas are the reflection in his mind of the properties of external material objects—wood or metal—which he has come to know in the course of his practical use of them. These ideas of his originated in his mind as reflections of external material things and as a result of his productive activity. But having been formed in his mind, they are then a factor, and an indispensable one, in determining his productive activity, in which he shapes and changes the wood or metal in conformity to his ideas about it and about what can be done with it. People do not work without ideas. Indeed, when primitive man made his first stone implements, he was already demonstrating the role played by ideas in man's activity of changing his conditions of material life.

What is true of labour is true of social activity in general. People do not carry out their social activity without ideas. The ideas which arise in their heads are in their origin determined by their material activity arising from the conditions of material life of society. Possessing these ideas, men undertake activities which react back upon and change the conditions of material life.

Thus the ideas which become current in society are formed in men's brains as a consequence of and as a reflection of their material activity and the conditions of material life. Men's social activity takes place on the basis of given conditions of material life; these conditions are reflected in ideas in men's brains; and with these ideas men then carry out social activity reacting back upon the conditions of material life.

"Everything which sets men in motion must go through their minds," wrote Engels. "But what form it will take in the mind will depend very much upon the circumstances."<sup>1</sup>

We have already remarked that certain mechanistic material-

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, ch. 4.

ists see only that ideas are called forth in the brain through the influence of external material conditions. They do not see the active role which ideas then play in human activity to change external reality. Idealists, on the other hand, are “one-sided” in the opposite sense. They see only the ideas, disregarding the material conditions from which they take their origin, and then stress the active role which ideas play in human life. They separate ideas even from the brain in which they are formed, regard them as separate existences and as the first cause of everything men do. Dialectical materialism, in opposition to idealism, sees how ideas arise in the brain only as reflections of given material conditions. But it does not the less see also the role which ideas play in the human activity of changing material conditions.

“It does not follow,” wrote Stalin, “. . . that social ideas, theories, political views and political institutions are of no significance in the life of society, that they do not reciprocally affect social being, the development of the material conditions of the life of society.... As regards the *significance* of social ideas, theories, views and political institutions, as regards their *role* in history, historical materialism, far from denying them, stresses the role and importance of these factors in the life of society, in its history.”<sup>1</sup>

#### *New Ideas and Old*

In relation to social development, ideas play one or other of two roles—they either promote or hinder the development of society, they are either progressive or reactionary.

It is characteristic of social ideas that, having arisen on the basis of the development of given conditions of material life, they tend to continue in existence even after the conditions which gave rise to them have disappeared, or are in process of disappearance. In other words, there is a tendency for ideas to lag.

This tendency may be observed also in individuals. Here is an example.

“Let us take a shoemaker who owned a tiny workshop, but who, unable to withstand the competition of the big shoe manufacturers, closed his workshop and took a job at a shoe factory.

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.



He went to work at the factory not with a view to becoming a permanent wage-worker, but with the object of saving up some money, of accumulating a little capital to enable him to re-open his workshop. As you see, the position of this shoemaker is *already* proletarian, but his consciousness is *still* non-proletarian, it is thoroughly petty-bourgeois. In other words, this shoemaker has *already* lost his petty-bourgeois position, it has gone, but his petty-bourgeois consciousness has *not yet* gone, it has lagged behind his actual position.”<sup>1</sup>

Even today in some factories there are people who still suffer from this “lag” in consciousness. But the individualistic, petty-bourgeois ideas, which may have been very useful to a small trader in trying to run his business, are not at all beneficial to the wage worker: they prevent him from combining with his fellow workers.

Ideas arising out of old conditions of existence, but continuing their influence when those old conditions are already demolished or ripe for demolition, thus come to act as a reactionary, conservative force, hindering the new, progressive developments in society.

The struggle to organise a factory, for example, may involve a struggle to supplant the old, small-capitalist ideas in the minds of some workers, which prevent them from combining against the employers, by new, working-class ideas.

It is the same when the fight against the employers has placed power in the hands of the working class. Even when capitalist exploitation has been abolished, the struggle to build a new, socialist society involves the struggle to eliminate the remnants of capitalism in the minds of men for ideas born of the capitalist social relations lag on, even after those social relations have ceased to exist.

Old ideas, reflecting social conditions dating from the past which have become outmoded, serve the forces which are striving to preserve the old social conditions, and hamper the forces which are striving to bring new social conditions into being. It is therefore the reactionary classes which champion such ideas, strive to keep them alive by dressing them up in new forms and

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Anarchism or Socialism*, ch. 2.

adapting them to the exigencies of the current struggle, and propagate them in every way and by every means in their power. The progressive class, on the other hand, needs to combat such ideas, to destroy their influence, and to develop its own new ideas corresponding to the new social tasks.

In class society, therefore, ideas reflect the standpoints and tendencies of different classes. The class struggle is waged also by means of ideas. So in the sphere of ideas, reflecting the class struggle in all its complexity, there occur periods of apparent quiescence and periods of open conflict—victories and defeats, alliances and splits, compromises, manoeuvres and struggles for positions of leadership. In the battle of ideas, in fact, the whole battle to change society is fought out. Ideas are always a potent force in society.

Hence when we speak of the battle of ideas it should never be supposed that we are referring merely to some task of a minority of “intellectuals”, who are carrying on controversies in the higher ideological spheres of philosophy, religion, science or art. We shall examine in the third volume how such “higher ideology” arises and what is its significance. The fundamental work of the battle of ideas, however, is being carried on by everyone who recruits a non-unionist into a trade union or a new member into the Communist Party, who argues against and exposes current capitalist propaganda or combats right-wing labour ideas which represent capitalist influence in the labour movement.

The social role of ideas can, then, be summed up by saying that while old ideas, based on the material conditions of the past, hamper the progressive development of society and are championed by the reactionary classes, new ideas, based on what is new in the development of the material life of society and on the needs of that development, are championed by the progressive classes and actively assist the progressive development of society.

“New social ideas and theories,” wrote Stalin, “arise only after the development of the material life of society has set new tasks before society. But once they have arisen they become a most potent force which facilitates the carrying out of the new tasks set by the development of the material life of society, a force which facilitates the progress of society. It is precisely here that the tremendous organising, mobilising and transforming

value of new ideas, new theories, new political views and new political institutions manifests itself.”<sup>1</sup>

Such ideas and theories are indispensable if the new tasks set before society by the development of material life are to be fulfilled. People cannot act effectively without ideas.

Thus “new social ideas and theories arise precisely because they are necessary to society, because it is *impossible* to carry out the urgent tasks of development of the material life of society without their organising, mobilising and transforming action. Arising out of the new tasks set by the development of the material life of society, the new social ideas and theories force their way through, become the possession of the masses, mobilise and organise them against the moribund forces of society, and thus facilitate the overthrow of these forces which hamper the development of the material life of society.”<sup>2</sup>

When such new ideas, generally put forward in the first place by a few people only, have indeed “become the possession of the masses”—when, because these ideas correspond to their material needs, the masses have made them their own—then ideas become an invincible force.

“Theory becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses.”<sup>3</sup>

### *Socialist Theory and the Mass Movement*

We have now attempted to summarise three guiding principles of historical materialism, resulting from the application of the materialist world outlook to social questions.

What practical conclusions follow?

(1) The conclusion follows that the working class today, in its struggle for emancipation, must base its practical aims and policy, not on mere dreams and ideals, but on consideration of the actual social circumstances and the objective laws of social development.

If we base practical aims and policy on mere dreams and ide-

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*. Quoted by Stalin, *loc. cit.*

als, however noble and inspiring, we have no guarantee that we shall ever find the way to realise them or even that they will be capable of realisation at all. The laws of social development will assert themselves against us or in spite of us, frustrating our schemes and issuing in events which take us by surprise and leave us bewildered and helpless. If, on the other hand, we base our practical activity on scientific knowledge of the laws of development of society, then we can consciously utilise those laws, we can formulate practical objectives which correspond to the actual circumstances and needs of the people, and we can find how to mobilise the forces capable of actually achieving those objectives.

“The practical activity of the party of the proletariat,” wrote Stalin, “must not be based on the good wishes of ‘outstanding individuals’, not on the dictates of ‘reason’, ‘universal morals’, etc., but on the laws of development of society and on the study of these laws. . . . The party of the proletariat should not guide itself in its practical activity by casual motives, but by the laws of development of society and by practical deductions from these laws.”<sup>1</sup>

(2) The conclusion follows that in striving to change society we must base our programme on consideration of the real conditions and needs of development of the material life of society. Only such a programme can correspond to the real requirements of masses of people and so effectively serve to mobilise the forces capable of changing society.

If, on the other hand, our programme consists only of ideal projects of reform; and if we suppose that we can translate abstract conceptions of reason or justice which arise in our heads into concrete reality without taking into account the actual material conditions of social life; then, however fine-sounding the programme, it is divorced from real life, and those who follow it will be led into an impasse.

Our programme, therefore, based “not on the good wishes of ‘great men’ but on the real needs of development of the material life of society”, must show in a practical way how people’s material needs are to be satisfied. “The strength and vitality of Marx-

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

ism-Leninism lies in the fact that it does base its practical activity on the needs of the development of the material life of society and never divorces itself from the real life of society.”<sup>1</sup>

(3) The conclusion follows that in order to transform society and to build socialism we must have socialist ideas, a revolutionary theory, corresponding to the task.

Historical materialism, therefore, teaches us to stress at all times the need for socialist ideas, for socialist theory.

“The party of the proletariat must rely upon such a social theory as correctly reflects the needs of development of the material life of society, and which is therefore capable of setting into motion broad masses of the people and of mobilising and organising them into a great army of the proletarian party, prepared to smash the reactionary forces and to clear the way for the advanced forces of society.”<sup>2</sup>

If we neglect to study revolutionary theory and to develop it, if we turn our backs upon the need for advanced ideas and are content to follow our noses and rely upon the spontaneous movement of the masses, then we will never build a movement capable of changing society.

If we neglect to fight for socialist ideas in opposition to capitalist ones, and to struggle to make those socialist ideas the possession of the mass movement, then we will ourselves inevitably remain the dupes of capitalist ideas as can be verified in the case of all those “socialist” leaders today who think that socialist theory is of no importance. No one’s head contains a vacuum, however near this state some heads may have become; and the old ideas lag on unless consciously expelled by new ones.

The conclusion is, then, that knowledge of the laws of development of society, of the conditions of the material life of society and of the needs of their development, becomes a great social force acting to end the old social conditions and bring in new ones, when it is developed and applied by the party of the working class, when the ideas of scientific socialism are united with the mass movement of the working class.

Such, then, are the leading principles and conclusions drawn

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

from the application of materialism to social questions. As we can see, the materialist world outlook now becomes a practical programme, a fighting strategy, for the working- class movement.

In the ensuing chapters we shall examine in more detail the conclusions reached by historical materialism about the laws of social development.

*Part Two**HOW SOCIETY DEVELOPS*

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE MODE OF PRODUCTION

The whole development of society is determined by the development of the productive forces and consequent changes in the relations between men in production. The productive forces and the production relations of a given period together constitute the mode of production.

From division of labour in production emerge private property, and so the rise of exploitation and the division of society into antagonistic classes.

In the development of society there have arisen five types of production relations: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism.

*Production of the Means of Life*

Historical materialism finds the key to the laws of development of society in “the simple fact... that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

Before people can do anything else, they must obtain the means of life—food, clothing and shelter. And they obtain the means of life, not as a free gift from nature but by associating together to produce their necessities of life and to exchange the things produced. Only on the basis of associating to produce and exchange the means of life can they develop and pursue any of their other social interests.

Hence “the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and, consequently, the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, the ideas on art, and even on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

And hence “the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced... is the basis of every social order.... In every society that has appeared in history, the distribution of the products and with it the division of society into classes, is determined by what is produced and how it is produced and how the product is exchanged.”<sup>1</sup>

In this way historical materialism traces back the ultimate cause of the whole movement of society to the conditions of material life of society and to changes in the conditions of material life.

These conditions of material life include, of course, the natural, geographical environment in which society exists. Their geographical environment is bound to *influence* people’s social life, in as much as it conditions what they do and are able to do. But what determines the *change* and *development* of social life is not the geographical environment—which changes very little—but the changing methods which people inhabiting given territories find of producing their means of living. What determines social development is not surrounding nature but the methods people adopt of wresting their material requirements from nature. The conditions of material life on the change of which the whole development of society depends are conditions which people themselves create by their own activity of making their living, of producing the means of life.

We can verify this by the history of our own country. Britain has changed very little in a geographical sense during the last two thousand years. Yet in this period the conditions of material life of the people living in Britain have changed fundamentally. From the ancient British tribal society we have evolved to modern capitalist society, and will soon advance to socialism. This whole development rests on the fact that in these years the people have cleared the scrub and forest which used to cover the most fertile areas, have developed agriculture, have mined for coal and mineral wealth, have built ships to carry goods back and forth across the world, have built great industries. And as they have done these things, the whole of their social relations have undergone a

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.



series of transformations, while the institutions and ideas of the people have alike undergone fundamental changes.

The way in which people produce and exchange their means of life is known as the *mode of production*. Every society is based on a mode of production, which is what ultimately determines the character of all social activities and institutions.

In the course of the history of society the mode of production has undergone considerable changes. It has developed from the most primitive economy of food-gathering and hunting tribes up to the socialist economy which has been born in the present century. One mode of production has followed upon another. And this economic change and development, this change and development of the mode of production of the material means of life, constitutes the basis of the whole of social development.

The materialist conception of history, then, raises three major questions:

(1) To define more exactly what are the chief factors which go to constitute the mode of production, and changes in which constitute changes in the mode of production;

(2) To examine the laws governing the changes in the mode of production, as the basic laws of development of human society;

(3) To examine the laws whereby the whole superstructure of social views and institutions arises and changes on the basis of changes in the mode of production.

The first question will be dealt with in this chapter; the second in chapters 5 and 6; and the third in chapters 7 and 8.

### *Production and Property*

The mode of production is always social, because each individual does not produce the whole of his material needs for himself, solely by his own labour, independent of other individuals. The material goods required by the community are produced by the labour of many individuals, who thus carry on a "mutual exchange of activities" in producing the social product which is distributed among the community.

So in considering the mode of production we must distinguish first of all the social *forces* which people bring into operation in order to produce the products—the actual material means

whereby production is undertaken; and secondly, the mutual *relations* into which people enter in producing and exchanging the products.

We must distinguish (1) the *forces of production* and (2) the *relations of production*. These together define the mode of production. And changes in the mode of production are brought about by changes in the forces of production and changes in the relations of production.

(1) What, then, do we mean by the *forces of production*?

In order to produce, instruments of production are necessary, that is, tools, machines, means of transport and so on. But these do not produce anything by themselves. It is people who make them and use them. Without people with the skill to make and use the instruments of production, no production is possible.

The forces of production, therefore, consist of (a) the instruments of production, and (b) the people, with their production-experience and skill, who use these instruments.

(2) And what do we mean by the *relations of production*?

People do not make and use the instruments of production, or acquire and exercise their production-experience and skill, without entering into mutual relations in so doing. In making and using the instruments of production, in acquiring and exercising their production-experience and skill, people enter into relations with each other, whereby they are associated and organised in the process of social production.

These relations are partly simple and direct relations which people enter into with one another in the actual production process itself—simple and direct relations between people engaged in a common productive task.

But when people carry on production they must needs enter into social relationships, not only with one another, but also with the *means of production* which they are utilising.

By the “means of production”, we denote something more than the instruments of production. We denote all those means which are necessary to produce the finished product—including not only the instruments (which are part of the forces of production), but also land, raw materials, buildings in which production is undertaken, and so on.

In undertaking production, then, it is necessary for people

socially to regulate their mutual relationships to the means of production. And this is how *property* relations arise. In social production, the means of production become the property of various people or groups of people. For in carrying on production and exchange it is necessary that some arrangement should be made, binding on the members of society, whereby it is known who is entitled to dispose of the various means of production and of the product which is produced from their utilisation.

This regulation of people's mutual relationships to the means of production, and consequently of their share of the product, is not undertaken as a result of any conscious or deliberate act—of any general decision or “social contract”. It comes about by an unconscious or spontaneous process. People come to regulate their mutual relationships to the means of production and the disposal of the social product in a way corresponding to the forces of production, since otherwise they cannot carry on production. And entering into these relationships in the process of production, they become conscious of them as property relations.

In the very primitive production carried on by a tribe of hunters, the hunters enter into simple, direct relations with one another as fellow huntsmen, and the land they hunt over and the beasts which they hunt are not regarded as the property of any particular individuals or groups. The whole tribe organises hunting expeditions, and what they bring back from the hunt is common property and is shared out among the tribesmen.

But when division of labour arises, and one person specialises in producing this and another in producing that, then the instruments used begin to be regarded as the property of particular persons, and so does the product produced become the property of the producer, to be disposed of by himself. Similarly, when animals are domesticated and herds are raised, herds become the property of particular families, and of the head of the family. At a later stage, land becomes private property.

Thus as a result of the development of the forces of production—for the development of agriculture, handicrafts, and so on, is precisely a development of the forces of production—and as a result of the division of labour which accompanies this development, there gradually arises ownership of means of production by individual people or groups of people. In other words, private

property arises.

Here it can already be seen that the driving force in social development is the development of the forces of production.

Property relations are essentially social relations between people, arising out of production. At first sight, property relations may look like simple and direct relations between individual property-owners and the property they own. This is not so, however. Robinson Crusoe on his island was not a property-owner, but simply a man on an island. Property relations are relations between people in society—complex relations between men and men, not simple relations between men and things. In the production which they carry on, men establish social relations, or relations of production, between one another whereby the means of production which they utilise are the property of this or that group, of this or that individual.

Property relations, therefore, are ways of regulating people's mutual relationships in utilising the means of production and in disposing of the product.

Property relations simply give conscious, legal expression to these mutual relationships which, by being expressed as property relations, appear as obligatory relationships, binding on society.

Now, therefore, we can define the relations of production as the mutual relations into which people enter in the process of production and which express themselves as property relations.

And the relations of production obtaining in society at any particular stage of its development constitute the *economic structure* of society at that stage.

### *Exploitation*

The products of productive activity are appropriated in various different ways, and so differently distributed among the members of society, according to the type of economy prevailing.

What determines the ways in which, in different societies, the product is appropriated?

In general, it is the form of ownership of the means of production, the nature of the property relations, of the relations of production, which determines the form of appropriation and the way in which the means of life are distributed.

In the most primitive communities the means of production

are socially owned, they are held in common by the producers. This is a consequence of the very primitive character of the instruments of production. With only very primitive tools and implements, division of labour has hardly developed, people are obliged to work in common in order to survive, and labour in common leads to the common ownership of the means of production. The fruits of production are accordingly shared by the whole community. Just as the means of production are not the property of any particular individual or group, so the product is not appropriated by any particular individual.

In socialist society, again, the means of production are socially owned. But this time it is the consequence of the very highly developed character of the instruments of production. The socialisation of labour brought about by the development of modern large-scale industry creates the necessity of the social ownership of the means of production. And then once more the product is socially appropriated, being distributed "to each according to his labour" in the first stage of socialist society, and "to each according to his needs" in the stage of fully developed communist society.

But in all the communities known to history between primitive communism and socialism, the means of production are not socially owned, but are held by individuals or groups, a minority of the community. As a result, those who hold the means of production are able, by virtue of their position as owners, to appropriate the product. And so it becomes possible for them to live on the fruits of the labour of others, in other words, to exploit them. Those who do not own means of production are compelled to work for the benefit of those who do.

How does such a state of affairs come about?

In the first place, the development of division of labour breaks up the primitive system of communal production by a whole tribe and results in ownership of means of production gradually passing into the hands of particular individuals and groups. With this comes the private appropriation of the product, for the product is appropriated by whoever owns the means of production. As herds pass out of the common possession of the tribe into the ownership of individual heads of families, as cultivated land is allotted to the use of single families, as handicrafts

appear, so the corresponding product ceases to be a communal possession and is privately appropriated.

Further, with private property there begins also the transformation of the product into a commodity—a process which is finally completed in capitalist society, when practically the whole product takes the form of commodities.

It is when products are exchanged for other products that we call them commodities; commodities are products produced for exchange with other products. “The rise of private property in herds and articles of luxury,” wrote Engels, “led to exchange between individuals, to the transformation of products into commodities.”<sup>1</sup> For while in a communal mode of production men share out their product amongst themselves, thus carrying on a “mutual exchange of activities but not an exchange of products, when private property develops the owner does not necessarily require the product he has appropriated for himself but exchanges it for other products.

This has far-reaching effects. “When the producers no longer directly consumed their product themselves, but let it pass out of their hands in the act of exchange, they lost control of it. They no longer knew what became of it; the possibility was there that one day it would be used against the producer to exploit and oppress him.”<sup>2</sup>

As commodity exchange grows and, with it, the use of money, it acts as a powerful force in further breaking up all former communal modes of production, concentrating the ownership of property into the hands of some, while others are dispossessed. The inevitable result of the growth of private property is the division of the community into “big” and “small” men, those with property and those without it, possessors and dispossessed.

In the second place, the division of labour, from which these results follow, is linked with a growth in the productivity of labour. Where formerly the productive labour of a whole tribe could scarcely produce enough to satisfy the minimum requirements of all the producers, now labour produce a surplus. Those who work can produce enough to satisfy their own essential

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ch. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

needs, and more besides. Hence there arises the possibility that those who own means of production shall appropriate to themselves, without labour, the surplus from the labour of others. And once this possibility has come into existence, it is soon taken advantage of.

The first result is slavery. Once the producer can produce by his labour more than he himself consumes, it becomes worthwhile to capture and maintain slaves. Then there appear masters and slaves, the masters appropriating to themselves the whole product of the slaves' labour and allowing the slaves only as much as is necessary to keep them alive.

Slavery is the first form of exploitation of man by man.<sup>1</sup> In slavery the master owns the means of production and owns the slave as well. A second form of exploitation is the feudal, the exploitation of serfs by feudal proprietors. Here the lord does not own the serf as the master owns the slave, but he owns the land, and the serf is tied to the land: the serf is permitted to get his living from the land on condition that he renders up to the lord as his due the greater part of the produce. A third form of exploitation is the capitalist, the exploitation of the wage-workers by the capitalists. Here the workers are technically free, but are deprived of means of production and can make a living only by selling their labour-power to the capitalists. The latter, as owners of the means of production, appropriate the product.

But whatever the form of exploitation, the essence of exploitation is always the same: the producers produce a surplus over and above their own essential requirements, and this surplus is appropriated by non-producers by virtue of their ownership of some form of property.

“The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave labour and one based on wage labour, lies only in the mode in which this surplus labour is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the labourer.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the development of private property and exploitation see Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ch. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, ch. 9, section 1.

It is the development of production and the development of property that gives rise to exploitation. Exploitation means that some people, a minority of society, are by virtue of their ownership of property living without labour on the fruits of the labour of others, of the majority.

It follows that in every mode of production which involves the exploitation of man by man, the social product is so distributed that the majority of people, the people who labour, are condemned to toil for no more than the barest necessities of life. Sometimes favourable circumstances arise when they can win more, but more often they get the barest minimum—and at times not even that. On the other hand, a minority, the owners of means of production, the property owners, enjoy leisure and luxury. Society is divided into rich and poor.

It further follows that if we are ever to do away with the extremes of poverty and wealth, then this can never be achieved by simply calling for a new mode of distribution of the social product. Capitalist society, for example, cannot be reformed by simply decreeing a more equal distribution of products, as is visualised in the reformist slogans of “a fair distribution of the proceeds of labour”, or “fair shares for all”, or, as the latest version goes, “equality of sacrifice”. For the distribution of the means of consumption is based on the ownership of the means of production. It is the latter which must be attacked.

“The so-called conditions of distribution,” wrote Marx, “correspond to and arise from historically defined and specifically social forms of the process of production, and of conditions into which human beings enter in the process by which they reproduce their lives. This historical character of these conditions of distribution is the same as that of the conditions of production, one side of which they express. Capitalist distribution differs from those forms of distribution which arise from other modes of production, and every mode of distribution disappears with the peculiar mode of production from which it arose and to which it belongs.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Classes and Class Struggles*

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, ch. 41.



With the development of social production beyond the primitive commune, the community is divided into groups occupying different places in social production as a whole, with different relationships to the means of production and therefore different methods of acquiring their share of the product. Such groups constitute the social *classes*, and their relations constitute the class relations or class structure of a given society.

The existence of classes is a consequence of the division of labour in social production. From the division of labour follow forms of private property, and thence the division of society into classes. "The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership; i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the materials, instruments and products of labour."<sup>1</sup>

What constitutes and distinguishes classes is not primarily differences in income, differences in habits, or differences in mentality, but the places they occupy in social production and the relations in which they stand to the means of production, from which their differences in income, habits, mentality and so on arise.

"The fundamental feature that distinguishes classes," wrote Lenin, "is the place they occupy in social production and, consequently, the relation in which they stand to the means of production."<sup>2</sup>

Consequently Lenin gave the following definition of classes.

"Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically definite system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in laws) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the social wealth that they obtain and their method of acquiring their share of it. Classes are groups of people one of which may appropriate the labour of another, owing to the different places they occupy in the definite system of social

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, Part I, ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *Vulgar Socialism and Narodism*.

economy.”<sup>1</sup>

And with classes there arise class antagonisms, class conflicts.

Classes are antagonistic when the places they occupy in the system of social production are such that one class obtains and augments its share of social wealth only at the expense of another. Thus the relations between exploiters and exploited are inevitably antagonistic. And so are the relations between one exploiting class and another when their methods of exploitation come into conflict. Thus the relations between rising bourgeoisie and feudal lords, for example, were antagonistic, since the one could maintain and the other develop its method of exploitation only at the expense of the other.

Society based on exploitation is inevitably divided into antagonistic classes. “These warring classes are always the product of the conditions of production and exchange, in a word, of the economic conditions of their time.”<sup>2</sup> Such a society is torn by class conflicts—between exploiters and exploited, and between rival exploiters.

For this reason “the history of ail hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”<sup>3</sup>

These class struggles are rooted in conflicts of material interests between the different classes—conflicting economic interests arising from the different places occupied by different classes in social production, their different relations to the means of production, their different methods of obtaining and augmenting their share of social wealth.

Not all class relations, however, are antagonistic. The relations between non-exploiting classes do not contain grounds for conflict.

In the socialist society of the U.S.S.R., for example, where all exploitation of man by man has been abolished, there still remain two distinct classes between which friendly, non-antagonistic relations exist—the Soviet workers and peasants. The dis-

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *A Great Beginning*.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 1.

inction between these two classes, like all class distinctions, is rooted in the different places they occupy in social production. The Soviet workers are engaged in state enterprises socially owned by the whole society in the person of the socialist state; the Soviet collective farm peasants, on the other hand, are engaged in group, co-operative enterprises—collective farms. Consequently while the product of the workers' social labour belongs to the whole of society and is disposed of by the whole of society, the product of the peasants' social labour belongs to the co-operative, collective farm groupings, and is disposed of by them. Thus the class distinction between Soviet workers and peasants arises from the difference of public and group property. But neither class exploits the other, neither acquires and augments its share of the social wealth at the expense of the other.

### *Types of Economic Systems*

We have seen that the mode of production in society involves two factors—the forces of production, consisting of the instruments of production and the people with their production-experience and skill; and the relations of production, or property relations. The latter in their totality constitute the economic structure of society. According to the different forms of property prevailing, society is divided into classes.

The economic structure or economic system of society is described in its most general features in terms of the forms of property and class relationships. Different economic systems are distinguished by different forms of property, by different classes and class relationships, by different relations of production.

The types of production relations, and therefore the types of economic system which have appeared in the course of history, are, in order:

1. *Primitive communism*, in which the means of production are held in common and there exist neither classes nor exploitation.

2. *Slavery*, in which the master class owns both means of production and slaves. Slavery involved the break-up of the former communal property, the passing of the means of production into the hands of a few proprietors and the enslavement of the producers.

3. *Feudalism*, in which the serf is tied to the land and renders tribute to the landowner. The rise of the feudal system involved the freeing of slaves, the fall of the slave-owners, the rise of a new class of feudal landowners, the conversion of the producers into serfs.

4. *Capitalism*, in which the capitalist owns the means of production and in which the worker, being entirely divorced from means of production, is forced to sell his labour power to the capitalist for wages. The rise of the capitalist system involved abolition of the ties which bound the serf to the land, the fall of the feudal lords and the rise of the capitalists, the conversion of the producers into propertyless proletarians.

5. *Socialism*, in which the means of production are once again socially owned, in which exploitation of man by man is abolished, and in which the whole of social production is planned for the benefit of society as a whole. The rise of socialism involves the expropriation of the capitalists.

These types of economic system form a series in the sense that each arises from the previous system in the way we have just indicated, and in the sense that each arises at a higher level of development of the productive forces. The series is an ascending series precisely because it represents a rising curve of productive powers. If socialism represents a higher level of economic development than capitalism, this simply means that men's productive powers develop further under socialism than under capitalism. For the same reason, capitalism is a higher system than feudalism, feudalism than slavery, and slavery than primitive communism. There was no economy before primitive communism. Primitive communism is the earliest and simplest economy, which takes shape when man and human society first emerge from the animal world. The concept of development from lower to higher, in this context, carries no moral implications whatever—though the economic development does in fact serve as the basis for the moral and spiritual development of mankind.

To guard against misunderstandings, two further points of explanation must be added about the five types of economic system.

In the first place, when we distinguish primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism as *types* of produc-

tion relations or of economic structure, this by no means implies that the actual economy of every human community *exactly* conforms to one or other of these types. On the contrary, these systems are seldom or never to be met with in a “pure” form.

This fact does not in the least invalidate the concepts of the different types of production relations. Engels has pointed out, for instance, that no perfect example of a feudal system ever existed—but that does not mean that we cannot distinguish feudal relations of production as a well-defined type of relations distinct from, say, slave or capitalist relations of production.<sup>1</sup>

There is a clear-cut difference between the distinct types of production relations. But in most historically constituted communities the production relations do not in their totality conform to a single type. When we speak of slave society, feudal society or capitalist society, this means no more than that the slave, feudal or capitalist type of production relations predominate in the social economy, and have an overriding influence in the development of the economy.

For example, there has never been a slave society in which the whole working population was enslaved. Not only are there always many survivals of primitive communism in slave societies—and these persist right through feudalism and even when capitalist relations are being established—but there is always a large population of independent petty producers who remain freemen and are not enslaved, while at the same time a flourishing merchant class arises in slave society. Pure feudalism exists no more than pure slavery. And when it comes to the rise of capitalism, survivals of previous modes of production persist, and long before they have been eliminated as a result of the growth of capitalist relations, capitalism itself is ripe for replacement by socialism. Finally, when socialist relations are first established, capitalist relations still survive for some time in some sectors of economy. Only when all exploitation of man by man in all its forms is finally eliminated, does a full, complete socialist economy at last come into being.

In the second place, while the types of economy form an ascending series, it does not follow that every single community

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<sup>1</sup> See Engels, *Letter* to C. Schmidt, March 12, 1895.

must in its development pass completely through each stage before being able to move on to the next. What is true of human society as a whole does not necessarily apply to each particular community. Human society as a whole passes through the five stages we have listed, and the way is prepared for the appearance of a new system only as a result of the development of the previous system. But the new system does not necessarily appear first in that place where the old one has been most strongly entrenched and most fully developed. Indeed, in those communities where the old system has become most strongly entrenched it may be hardest to get rid of it, so that the break-through of the new system is effected in the first place elsewhere. As we know, this is what happened in the case of the first break-through of socialism, which was effected in Russia, “the weakest link in the chain of imperialism”, and not in the more advanced capitalist countries.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of the forces of production, which arises from man's striving to master nature, is the root cause of all social development.

Relations of production arise in conformity with the forces of production. But as the forces of production develop, relations of production which corresponded with the former character of the forces of production no longer correspond with their new character. From serving to accelerate the development of the forces of production they come to retard it. Then follows a period of social revolution, in which new production relations are established.

This development has been effected by class struggles. At each stage a given class occupies the position of ruling class, and exercises and maintains its rule by means of the state. Social revolution involves the replacement of the rule of one class by that of another.

Hitherto every revolution has meant the rise to power of a new exploiting class, and progress has been achieved only by the imposition of new forms of exploitation on the masses of the people. In the socialist revolution, when the working class takes power, all exploitation is finally abolished.

#### *Development of Forces of Production*

We have defined the mode of production and the types of production relations—economic and class structures—through which production develops. This development of production is the basis of the entire development of human society. Our task is now to examine the causes of this economic development, the laws which regulate its transitions from one stage to another and the forces which effect the transition. The forces of production change and develop. So do the relations of production. And with these changes, new classes arise and come to the fore. These changes (1) in the forces of production, (2) in the relations of

production, and (3) in the class struggle, are connected together by definite laws. These laws are the fundamental laws of development of society, thanks to which there takes place a historical development from one mode of production to another.

First we shall consider the development of the forces of production.

In the course of history, the instruments of production have been developed from crude stone tools up to modern machinery. This development was effected by people, who designed and used the instruments of production. Consequently the change and development of the instruments of production was accompanied by a change and development of people—of their production-experience, their labour skill, their ability to handle the instruments of production.

This development of the forces of production, including the development of people as the most important of the forces of production, constitutes the root cause of the whole of social development.

From what does it arise?

It arises from men's constant striving to master nature. It arises from the fundamental opposition between men and nature, which is present from the first moment when men begin to fashion tools and to co-operate in their use, i.e. from the birth of mankind.

“Man,” wrote Marx, “opposes himself to nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate nature's production in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway.”<sup>1</sup>

Men, wanting to live better, strive to improve their technique, their tools and their skill—in other words, their productive forces. As a consequence, “the most mobile and revolutionary element in production” is the productive forces. ■

Change and development of production never begins with

<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, ch. 7, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.



changes in production relations, but always begins with development of productive forces. It is only when new productive forces are arising that men begin to feel the necessity for a change of production relations.

The improvement of productive forces is far from being a steady, continuous process throughout the history of society. Far from it being the case that every generation always improves upon the productive forces inherited from the previous generation, it has frequently happened that, having once acquired certain productive forces, people have made do with them for a very long time. And then their production relations have also remained basically the same for a very long time too.

Thus, for example, production remained at the level of the stone age for thousands of years, and all those generations continued to live the life of primitive communism. Again, in some societies methods of agriculture utilising irrigation remained unchanged for thousands of years, and for all that time their production relations remained virtually unchanged. But when, for whatever reason, new productive forces are acquired, then a process begins resulting eventually in changes of production relations. These new productive forces are developed within the existing production relations, but at a certain stage their development leads to changes of production relations.

Very rapid development of productive forces is a feature of capitalist society; it is brought about by the drive of the capitalists for profit. But it was not the case in modern history that first capitalist relations of production were introduced to supplant feudal relations, and only after that did development of productive forces begin. On the contrary, this development began within the feudal system, and it was only afterwards that capitalist relations of production supplanted the feudal relations. A whole series of inventions during the Middle Ages (use of water power, printing, new methods of navigation, spinning wheels, clocks, mining methods, lathes, cast iron, etc.), provided the conditions for the development of capitalism.

Change and development of production, then, starts “with changes and development of the instruments of production.... First the productive forces of society change and develop, and then, depending on these changes and in conformity with them,

men's relations of production, their economic relations, change....

"Consequently the productive forces are not only the most mobile and revolutionary element in production, but are also the determining element in the development of production.

"Whatever are the productive forces, such must be the relations of production."<sup>1</sup>

In carrying on production, people necessarily enter into definite relations of production. And in the long run, these relations of production always come to correspond with the character of the productive forces.

"Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces," wrote Marx. "In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist."<sup>2</sup>

#### *Unplanned, Spontaneous Development*

An important feature of this development of productive forces and of corresponding production relations is that the rise of new productive forces and of corresponding relations of production has not happened as a result of anyone's conscious plan or intention.

In general, "the rise of new productive forces and of the relations of production corresponding to them . . . takes place, not as a result of the deliberate and conscious activity of man, but spontaneously, unconsciously, independent of the will of man."<sup>3</sup>

In improving the productive forces, developing new tools and techniques, men have always sought some immediate advantage, but have been far from planning or intending the revolutionary social results which in fact follow from such development. Yet such improvements lead the way to great new developments of productive forces, which in turn necessitate corresponding changes in the relations of production.

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, ch. 2, section 1.

<sup>3</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

For example, when manufacture first started, the manufacturers who started it had no plan of creating gigantic new productive forces; they were simply seeking their own immediate advantage. To carry on manufacture they began to hire wage-labour, in other words, to initiate capitalist relations of production. They did not do this because they had an ambitious and far-seeing plan for building capitalism; they did it because that turned out to be the way in which manufacture could best be carried on.

In this way the development of new productive forces, namely, those brought into operation in manufacture, was never decided upon but happened spontaneously, independent of men's will, as a result of certain people seeking their own immediate advantage. And similarly, the development of these productive forces led to the institution of new relations of production—once more, spontaneously, by economic necessity and independent of men's will.

“In the social production which men carry on,” wrote Marx, they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production.”<sup>1</sup>

The relations of production into which people enter in the course of their social production are “indispensable”—because they cannot carry on production without entering into definite relations of production; and also “independent of their will”—because they do not decide beforehand to institute certain definite relations of production, but enter into these relations quite independent of any such decision.

Hence first the development of productive forces and then the change of production relations is brought about by economic activities which develop spontaneously, independent of men's will, and not by any deliberate decision or plan. This is a feature of social development right up to the socialist revolution. Only with the victory of the socialist revolution does it happen that production relations are changed as a result of deliberate decision and that thereafter the development of production is also regulated by a plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.

*Changes of Relations of Production*

Changes of the relations of production depend on development of the forces of production. Such is the law of social development. For it is a requirement of all social production that the relations which men enter into in carrying on production must be suitable to the type of production they are carrying on. Hence it is a general law of economic development that the relations of production must necessarily conform with the character of the forces of production.

Why, then, does development of productive forces necessitate *changes* of production relations?

The relations of production—the property relations, forms of ownership of the means of production—which necessarily arise out of social production, cannot but have an influence upon the development of the productive forces. They either accelerate or retard it.

As we have seen, people strive to develop their productive forces. Hence there is a tendency for the productive forces to move forward—they are “the most mobile and revolutionary element in production”. As for the production relations, on the other hand, once established they tend to remain fixed—the economic structure, the forms of property, the social system, is a conservative factor which resists change.

For this reason, the relation between production relations and productive forces is a contradictory one. While productive forces tend to change, production relations tend to remain the same. Hence the same production relations which at one time help forward the development of productive forces, at a later time begin to hinder that development and act as a fetter on it. When this happens, it is clear that instead of conformity between production relations and productive forces, there is a conflict between them.

For example, as we have just seen, the development of manufacture required the employment of wage-labour. Only with capitalist production relations could the newly developing forces of production flourish. But the existing feudal relations, which tied the labourer to the land and to the service of his lord, were a barrier to the development of the new productive forces. Hence these relations, within which production had once flourished, now began to act as a retarding force. A conflict arose between the exist-

ing production relations and new productive forces.

So long as relations of production which have come into being in conformity with the productive forces continue to accelerate the development of the productive forces, the social system based on them continues to flourish. But the development of the productive forces eventually reaches a point where their further development is not accelerated but retarded by the existing relations of production. And it is at that point that a change in the relations of production becomes necessary.

The forward development of the productive forces is the law of human history, which asserts itself despite all zigzags and setbacks. Anything which opposes this irresistible development is bound, sooner or later, to be swept away. So when the relations of production cease to accelerate but begin to retard the development of the productive forces, then the time is approaching when the social system based on them will fall.

Thus the communal system of primitive communism corresponded to a very primitive level of development of productive forces. When men began to acquire the use of metals, when pasturage, tillage and handicrafts appeared, then common ownership became a drag on the development of production and private property and the capture and exploitation of slaves appeared. Primitive communism gave place to slave society.

The slave system began by accelerating the development of the productive forces. But then the further development of the productive forces proved incompatible with the slave system. Slavery was replaced by feudalism, which was associated with further improvements in the smelting and working of iron, with the spread of the iron plough and the loom, with the further development of agriculture and the appearance of manufactories alongside the handicraft workshops.

Later still, feudalism in its turn came to retard the development of the productive forces. Feudal ownership, feudal dues and restrictions hampered the further development of manufacture, which demanded a source of free labour and the ending of serfdom, and likewise the ending of feudal restrictions on trade. Feudalism gave way to capitalism and capitalist relations of production.

Capitalism at first greatly accelerated the development of the forces of production. But their further development is now being

retarded and blocked by capitalism.

The fundamental feature of the increase of the forces of production brought about within capitalism is the socialisation of labour. Petty, individual production has been replaced by the power of social labour, in which men combine and co-operate together in great productive enterprises using power-driven machinery. Social labour is capable of immense achievements, miracles of construction for the welfare of all mankind. But it is fettered by the capitalist production relations, which compel production to serve private profit.

Social production is in contradiction with private capitalist appropriation, and must needs break the fetters of the capitalist production relations. When socialist relations are established, not only are the brakes taken off technical advance in all spheres of production, but the great productive forces of social labour are set free—people are their own masters and are working for themselves.

The general picture which emerges of social development from one system of production relations to another is, then, as follows.

First, relations of production arise in conformity with the development of the productive forces and act as forms of development of the productive forces. But the time comes when the further development of the productive forces comes into conflict with the existing relations of production. From forms of development of the social forces of production, these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of revolutionary change, when one type of production relations is replaced by another.

How, then, by what means, by what forces, are such changes brought about?

### *Class Struggle as the Motive Force of Social Change*

Society develops through a series of stages in each of which a definite type of property predominates. This development is far from being a smooth, gradual process of evolution, working itself out through a series of small changes and adjustments, without conflict, without struggle, without the forcible overthrow of the old system by the new. On the contrary, society has developed through a series of revolutions. And this development is effected

by means of class struggle.

The new economic system is established thanks to the rise of new classes, which struggle for dominance in society, overthrow the old ruling class and establish a new ruling class and a new system of production relations.

As the forces of production develop, and as new relations of production are brought into being corresponding to the development of the forces of production, so do classes arise and develop.

In primitive communism there were no classes. Classes, and in particular an exploiting class and an exploited class, first began to be formed as primitive communism was broken up as a result of the development of new forces of production and new relations of production. The crystallisation of the new relations of production, that is, new forms of property, brought into being the class structure of slave society—slave-owners and slaves.

In slave society, the development of agriculture, of iron-working, etc., began to make use of free workers rather than slaves. The slave estates began to decline, and at the same time constant slave revolts weakened the slave-owners still more. In place of slavery, serfdom began to be introduced, and new classes arose, feudal lords and serfs. The transition from slavery to feudalism was a long, gradual process, taking place through a series of political changes and civil wars, and complicated by external invasions. But as a result of these struggles, eventually the feudal elements became paramount. Slavery disappeared and gave place to feudalism.<sup>1</sup>

Then, within feudalism, manufactories began to arise and with them new classes, the urban bourgeoisie and the wage-earning class. Conflicts of interest began to arise between the bourgeoisie and the feudal owners, and at the same time peasant revolts against the feudal lords weakened the feudal system, and paved the way to the defeat of the feudal owners by the other classes of society, led by the bourgeoisie. Feudalism disappeared

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<sup>1</sup> The process of transition from slavery to feudalism has been little studied by Marxist historians. Hence only very tentative observations can be made at present about the factors operating in it. One of the most suggestive studies on this subject is contained in Jack Lindsay's *Byzantium into Europe* (London, 1953).

and capitalism arose in its place. Feudal lords and serfs disappeared, capitalists and wage-workers took their place.

Then came the struggle of the workers against the capitalists. Society is now divided into two great classes, capitalists and workers, exploiters and exploited. The exploiters are faced with no rival exploiting class rising to challenge them, but the class struggle becomes directly and simply the struggle of the exploited against the exploiters. Finally the workers defeat the capitalists and eliminate capitalist ownership. Thereby they have done away with the last exploiting class and created the basis for a society free from all exploitation of man by man.

So throughout the whole course of historical change, the change in the predominant type of production relations—the change in the economic basis of society—has come about as a result of class struggles. These struggles in every case arose on the basis of the existing production relations and culminated in a class victory which led to the transformation of the production relations. That is how the bringing of the production relations into conformity with the character of the developing productive forces has happened in every case.

### *The State and Revolution*

From the end of primitive communism up to the victory of socialism, society has always been divided into exploiters and exploited. A minority of exploiters has succeeded in living on the backs of the masses. The exploiting class has put down the resistance of the exploited; and it has also defended its own mode of exploitation from the challenge of rival exploiting classes with a different mode of exploitation.

But how has it been possible for a minority thus to preserve and exercise its domination over the majority?

It has been possible only because the minority possessed and had control over a special organisation for coercing the rest of society. That organisation is the state.

The state is not the whole society, but a special organisation within society, armed with power to repress and coerce, which serves the function of preserving and safeguarding the given social order. Whatever the form of the state—whether it be an autocracy, a military dictatorship, a democracy, etc.—its most es-



sential components consist of the means to exercise compulsion over the majority of society. Such compulsion is exercised by means of special bodies of armed men—soldiers, police, etc. It is enforced by physical means—by the possession of arms; by the possession of strong buildings, prisons, with locks and bars; by the possession of instruments to inflict pain and death. The state must also have a machinery of administration, a corps of state officials. It also develops a legal system, with judges to interpret and administer the law. And it also develops means not only of coercing men physically but mentally, by various types of ideological and propaganda agencies.

Such a special organisation became necessary only when society was divided into antagonistic classes. From that time onwards the state became necessary as a special power within society, armed with authority and force sufficient to prevent the social antagonisms from disrupting and destroying society.

“The state has not existed from all eternity,” wrote Engels. “There have been societies which have managed without it, which had no notion of the state or state power. At a definite stage of economic development, which necessarily involved the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity because of this cleavage.”<sup>1</sup>

Further: “As the state arose from the need to keep class antagonisms in check, but also in the thick of the fight between the classes, it is normally the state of the most powerful, economically ruling class, which by its means becomes also the politically ruling class, and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. . . . The central link in civilised society is the state, which in all typical periods is without exception the state of the ruling class.”<sup>2</sup>

The state, wrote Lenin, is “an organ of class rule, an organ for the repression of one class by another.”<sup>3</sup>

At each stage of social development, as we have seen, a particular type of production relations becomes predominant in the

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ch. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, ch. 1.

social economy, and the corresponding class assumes the dominant place in social production. It can gain and maintain that place only in so far as it can enforce its own interests as against those of the rest of society. And it can enforce those interests only in so far as it can gain and maintain control over the state. In every epoch, therefore, so long as society is divided into antagonistic classes, a particular class holds the state power and thereby establishes itself as ruling class. In slave society it is the slave-owners who hold this position, in feudal society the feudal lords, in capitalist society the capitalists, and when capitalism is overthrown the working class becomes the ruling class.

When the working class becomes the ruling class, then there is no longer the rule of the minority of exploiters over the majority of the exploited, but the rule of the majority over the minority. The aim of working-class rule is to abolish all exploitation and thereby all class antagonisms. When eventually all exploitation of man by man has been eliminated the world over, then the coercive powers of the state will no longer be needed and the state itself will finally disappear.

In the history of class struggles every ruling exploiting class has always defended to the last the existing relations of production, the existing property relations; for on the preservation of these has depended its wealth and influence and, indeed, its very existence as a class. And it has been able to defend them because it has possessed state power. No ruling exploiting class has ever voluntarily given up state power or, having lost power, has ever failed to struggle desperately and by every means available to regain it. The overthrow of the existing relations of production can, therefore, only be accomplished by overthrowing the power of the ruling class.

Consequently all classes which stand in antagonism to the ruling class, and whose interests are bound up with the abolition of the existing relations of production, with the establishment of new relations of production and the further development of the productive forces, find themselves driven into struggle against the ruling class and eventually to rise against it and destroy its power.

“Every class struggle is a political struggle,” wrote Marx and

Engels.<sup>1</sup> Just as, in the last analysis, all political struggle expresses the struggle of classes, so the class struggle must always express itself in a struggle to influence state, i.e. political affairs, and, in revolutionary periods, in a struggle for state power.

Decisive revolutionary changes in the economic structure of society are necessitated, and the way is prepared for them, by an economic process which develops independently of men's will—by the growth of the productive forces and the consequent incompatibility of the production relations with the new productive forces. But such changes are actually carried through as a result of political struggles. For, whatever are the issues raised, and whatever forms the struggle takes, these are in the last analysis the ways in which men become conscious of the economic and class conflicts and fight them out.

*Social revolution* is, therefore, the transfer of state or political power from one class to another class. "The question of power is the fundamental question of every revolution."<sup>2</sup>

Revolution means the overthrow of the ruling class, which defends existing relations of production, and the conquest of power by a class which is interested in establishing new relations of production.

Every revolution, therefore, makes forcible inroads into existing property relations, and destroys one form of property in favour of another form of property.

"The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of communism," wrote Marx and Engels. "All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions. The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeois property. The distinguishing feature of communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property."<sup>3</sup>

### *Progress and Exploitation*

The great revolutionary changes of the past have seen the re-

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *On Slogans*.

<sup>3</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.

placement of one exploiting class by another exploiting class—of the slave-owners by the feudalists, and of them in turn by the capitalists—and thus the replacement of one system of exploitation by another system of exploitation.

In this process, the revolutionary energy of the exploited masses in their struggle against the exploiters has helped to destroy one exploiting class—in order to replace it by another exploiting class. Their struggle has served to break up the old system and to replace it by a new and higher system, but still a system of class exploitation.

Thus the struggle of the slaves against the slave-owners helped to break up the slave system—but to replace it by the feudal system. And the struggle of the serfs against the feudal lords helped to break up the feudal system—but to replace it by the capitalist system.

The whole of human progress is rooted in the increasing mastery of men over nature, in the increase of the social forces of production. In advancing their mastery over nature, men not only obtain their material needs, but enlarge their ideas, perfect their knowledge, develop their various capacities.

But yet this progress has borne a contradictory character. As man has mastered nature, so has man oppressed and exploited man. The benefits of progress belonged at one pole of society, the toil and sweat at the other. Each new stage of advance brought only new modes of exploitation; and with each step, more people were exploited.

“Since civilisation is founded on the exploitation of one class by another class, its whole development proceeds in a constant contradiction. Every step forward in production is at the same time a step backwards in the position of the oppressed class—that is, of the great majority. Whatever benefits some necessarily injures the others; every fresh emancipation of one class is necessarily a new oppression for another class.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus every step of progress has been won at the expense of the working people. The first great advances brought slavery in their train, and could only be carried through by means of slavery. The birth and growth of modern industry involved the

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family, etc.*, ch. 9.

wholesale ruin of small producers, the expropriation of masses of peasants from the land, the plunder of colonies, enormous increase of exploitation.

The rise of modern industry, however, has increased the powers of production to an extent unknown before. The power now exists, and for the first time, to produce plenty for everyone, without anyone wearing himself out with manual labour. In the past the forces of production were so limited that it was impossible to create conditions of leisure for any but a privileged minority of society. But this is no longer the case today.

For just this reason it is only now that the working people have arrived at a position when they themselves can rule and can take over the general management and direction of society. The slaves and serfs in the past could revolt time and again against their rulers, but were not themselves capable of taking command over production. They always had to look to someone else to manage social affairs. For the very character of the productive system meant that they were necessarily engrossed in labour, and so had to look to some privileged and educated minority to carry out the work of government.

We saw earlier that the division of society into exploiting and exploited classes was a result of the division of labour. And the division into rulers and ruled was a further consequence. With the development of production, a number of functions concerned with safeguarding the general interests of the community necessarily became the province of a special group of the community. "This independence of social functions in relation to society increased with time," wrote Engels, "until it developed into domination over society."<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, the majority of the people were relegated to the position where they were wholly occupied with toil, and the general functions of social guidance and management were assumed by a master class. "Alongside the great majority exclusively absorbed in labour, there developed a class, freed from direct productive labour, which managed the general business of society: the direction of labour, the affairs of state, justice, science, art and so forth. It is therefore the law of the division of

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Part II, ch. 4.

labour which lies at the root of the division into classes.”<sup>1</sup>

And consequently, “so long as the working population was so much occupied in their necessary labour that they had no time left for looking after the common affairs of society—the direction of labour, affairs of state, legal matters, art, science, etc.—so long was it necessary that there should exist a special class, freed from actual labour, to manage these affairs.” And then this class “never failed to impose a greater and greater burden of labour, for their own advantage, on the working masses.”

“Only the immense increase of the productive forces attained through large-scale industry,” Engels concluded, “makes it possible to . . . limit the labour time of each individual member to such an extent that all have enough free time left to take part in the general—both theoretical and practical—affairs of society. It is only now, therefore, that any ruling and exploiting class has become superfluous.”<sup>2</sup>

By the beginning of the present century capitalism had developed to the stage of imperialism, when a few giant monopolies divided up the entire world among themselves. All the peoples were subject to them. There was an enormous accession of wealth and power into a few hands. Never before was the contrast between the wealth and power of the few and the poverty and subjection of the many so glaring, nor had it existed on such a world-wide scale. But this was also the time for the people themselves at last to take over. The epoch of imperialism is the epoch of the socialist revolution—a revolution of an altogether new kind, which abolishes exploitation and lays the foundations of a society without class antagonisms.

By creating the socialised production of modern large-scale industry, capitalism has created conditions in which for the first time there exists the possibility of securing for all members of society not only continually improving material standards but also the completely unrestricted development of all their faculties. And it has created in the working class an exploited class which, by its very position as the product of large-scale industry, is fully capable of taking over the management and guidance of

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Part II, ch. 4.

society. The very advance of industry creates the conditions in which the working class not only grows in numbers and organisation, but trains itself for the task of taking command of production.

Thus we can conclude that “the history of class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class—the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction and class struggles.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Socialist Revolution*

The principal conclusion of the materialist theory of the laws of social development is, then, that of the historical necessity of the socialist revolution. And the materialist conception of history reveals on what forces socialism must rely, and how its victory can be won.

The socialist revolution differs in kind from every previous revolutionary change in human society.

In every revolution the economic structure of society is transformed. Every previous transformation had meant the birth and consolidation of a new system of exploitation. The socialist revolution, on the other hand, once and for all ends all exploitation of man by man.

In every revolution a new class comes to power, as ruling class. In every previous revolution power was transferred into the hands of an exploiting class, a tiny minority of society. In the socialist revolution, on the other hand, power passes into the hands of the working class, at the head of all the working people, i.e. into the hands of the vast majority. And this power is used, not to uphold the privileges of an exploiting class, but to destroy all such privileges and to end all class antagonisms.

Every revolution, since class society began, has been an act of liberation, in as much as it has achieved the emancipation of society from some form of class oppression. To this extent, every

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Engels' Preface to the English Edition of 1888.

revolution has had a popular character. But in every previous revolution one form of oppression has been thrown off only to be replaced by another. The energy of the masses has been devoted to the task of destroying the oppression of the old system. As to the new system which replaced the old, it has been built under the direction of new exploiters, who have invariably made it their business to impose new forms of oppression on the people. In the socialist revolution, on the other hand, the people not only destroy the old system, they are themselves the builders of the new.

When socialism wins, no class, no nation, no people is held down in order to be exploited by another. The function of coercion and repression which is exercised in the socialist revolution is turned against the minority of exploiters, to prevent the defeated exploiting class within the country from staging a comeback, and to prevent sabotage and attacks from capitalist powers outside. In proportion as the last vestiges of class antagonisms disappear within the country, the coercive powers of the socialist state are directed to external rather than internal affairs. "Now the main task of our state inside the country is the work of peaceful economic organisation and cultural education," wrote Stalin, after antagonistic classes had already disappeared in the Soviet Union. "As for our army, punitive organs and intelligence service, their edge is no longer turned to the inside of the country but to the outside, against external enemies."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, when (and, of course, only when) exploitation is abolished in all countries and no threat remains from any group of exploiters anywhere—when socialism has won all over the world—then all vestiges of coercion and repression finally disappear. As Engels expressed it, the state, as a special organ of coercion, finally "withers away." Naturally, centralised planning and administrative machinery will remain on a large scale. Production will be planned, health, education and other services will be organised. But there will be no repression or coercion; therefore no "state", as a special repressive and coercive organisation within society. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the process of production.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Report to 18th Congress of C.P.S.U.*

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.



The condition of the transition from capitalism to socialism must be the conquest of power by the working class—in other words, the ending of capitalist-class rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In order that the working people may build socialism, in order that capitalist property may be abolished in favour of socialist property, the capitalist state must be replaced by a socialist state.

Led by the working class, and with power in their own hands, the task of the working people is then to abolish capitalist property in the means of production, suppress the resistance of the defeated capitalist class, organise planned production for the benefit of society as a whole, and finally abolish all exploitation of man by man.

Summing up the principal lessons of historical materialism, Marx wrote:

“No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle of the classes and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did new was to prove:

“(1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production*.

“(2) That the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

“(3) That this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Letter to J. Weydemeyer*, March 5, 1852.

## CHAPTER SIX

## ECONOMIC LAWS AND THEIR UTILISATION

The fundamental laws of development of society are economic laws. They are objective laws which operate independently of men's will, and include both the specific laws peculiar to each particular social-economic formation and the general laws common to all formations.

People in society utilise economic laws for bringing about social changes. (1) This utilisation of economic laws is in class society always determined by class interests. (2) The progressive class utilises economic laws to carry society forward to a higher stage of development, while the reactionary classes resist. (3) With the working-class struggle for socialism, economic laws are utilised no longer in the exclusive interests of one class but in the interests of the majority of society. (4) While in the past the utilisation of economic laws has proceeded without scientific knowledge of such laws, the struggle for socialism is guided by scientific knowledge. (5) When socialism is established, then economic laws are utilised with full understanding to undertake the planned regulation of production in accordance with the needs both of society as a whole and of each individual.

*What are Economic Laws?*

We have seen that the fundamental laws of change and development in society are economic laws. Before proceeding further, we shall, in this chapter, consider some questions as to the nature of economic laws and the possibilities of their utilisation for various purposes by men in society.

The exact science which investigates the laws of economic development is political economy.

“Political economy,” wrote Stalin, “investigates the laws of development of men's relations of production.” Its province includes: “(a) the forms of ownership of the means of production; (b) the status of the various social groups in production and their inter-relations that follow from these forms, or what Marx calls

‘mutual exchange of their activities’; (c) the forms of distribution of products, which are entirely determined by them.”<sup>1</sup>

Hence the laws of economic development are the laws which regulate the development of forms of ownership of means of production, of classes and class relations, and of forms of distribution of products.

In considering economic laws it is necessary to consider not only the laws which operate within a given system of economy, but also the laws which determine the development of economy from one stage to another. For economic systems change, and one gives place to another.

Each system of economy, each social-economic formation, which arises in the course of social evolution—the slave system, the feudal system, the capitalist system, the socialist system—has its own specific laws of economic development, which operate only during the lifetime of that particular system. These laws follow from the objectively existing conditions of material life of society. But they are not permanent but temporary, transient laws.

Such economic laws regulate not only the workings of economic systems in a given stage of their development, but also their development through a series of stages. Thus capitalism, for instance, develops from manufacture to machine industry, and from free competition to monopoly: this is a consequence of economic laws and is itself a law of capitalist economic development. But economic laws also regulate the eventual replacement of one system by another. Thus if we consider the course of economic development in Europe over the period of the last two thousand years, we find a development through slave, feudal and capitalist economy to socialism; and this whole development has been regulated by economic laws.

There are very general and very fundamental economic laws which operate throughout the whole course of evolution of society, asserting themselves throughout all its stages and determining the transition from one stage to the next.

Such is the law that the relations of production must necessarily conform with the character of the productive forces. This law always asserts itself, with the result that any economic sys-

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*

tem which has ceased to conform with the character of new forces of production becomes obsolescent and falls into crisis and is eventually replaced by a new system which does conform with the character of the forces of production.

Consequently, different social-economic formations are “divided from one another by their own specific laws, but also connected with one another by the economic laws common to all formations.”<sup>1</sup>

The scientific understanding of social development requires, therefore, that we shall understand the specific laws of a given social-economic formation, such as capitalism, which in the last analysis explain the peculiarities of the social development during a particular period; and shall also understand the general laws operating throughout the whole course of economic development of society, which in the last analysis not only explain overall features of social development in each particular period but also explain the transition from one social-economic formation to another.

#### *Objective Character of Economic Laws*

“The laws of economic development,” wrote Stalin, “are objective laws, reflecting processes of economic development which take place independently of the will of man.”<sup>2</sup> They are objective laws, regulating the mutual relations of people in their economic activity with the same objective necessity as natural laws regulate the relationship of things in nature.

When, therefore, we speak of “laws of economic development” operating in society it should be evident that we are referring to something altogether different from the “laws” enacted by rulers and governing bodies. The latter are expressions of the will of men; the former are independent of the will of men. The latter are enforced, or attempted to be enforced, by governments; the former assert themselves independently of, and even in spite of, what people or governments may desire or decide to do.

For example, suppose that the government of a capitalist country enacted a law, as was at one time proposed, to grant “so-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

cial credits” to all the citizens sufficient to enable them to purchase all their needs. The “social credits” could be issued, but would the purpose of the “law” be fulfilled? It would certainly not be fulfilled, because it would violate objective laws of capitalist economy, which would continue to assert themselves and lead to the collapse of the “law” enacted by the government. Unlike laws enacted by governments, such objective laws have force independent of men’s will.

Again, suppose that the government of a socialist country enacted a “Five-Year Plan law” decreeing a vast increase of production, but without taking into account the existing economic resources of the country, its existing sources of raw material and of investments. Would such a “law” be effective? It certainly would not, for it would violate objective laws regulating the development of socialist economy. These laws would continue to assert themselves and lead to the collapse of any “law” or any “plan” which violated them.

Such examples show what, indeed, is perfectly familiar in experience, that economic laws assert themselves with objective necessity independent of the will of men.—If you hold a bank-note in the air and let it go, it will flutter down under the influence of the law of gravity. If the government prints millions of additional bank-notes, they will lose their value, under the influence of economic laws. And just as the economic laws specific to a given economic system are bound to assert themselves, so also, in the long run, are the laws which determine the passing away of a given system and the transition to a higher stage of economic development.

### The Utilisation of Economic Laws

The fact that events are regulated by laws which operate independently of men’s will does not mean that men, by their voluntary actions, cannot make use of such laws for furthering their own purposes. On the contrary, people can do this and are always doing it. We cannot abolish such laws or change them, but we certainly can and do utilise them.

Everyone knows, for example, that if the forces of nature operate in accordance with objective laws which we can neither abolish nor change, this does not mean that we cannot utilise

natural forces and natural laws for human ends. On the contrary, we can do this and are always doing it.

And similarly, people utilise the laws of their own social organisation, economic laws. They utilise these laws for the purpose of bringing about social changes in accordance with their interests. Indeed, if such laws exist, then it is obvious that no social changes can be effected except by their utilisation—just as, if natural laws exist, then we cannot change nature except by the utilisation of natural laws for that purpose. Those whose actions brought about the social changes must in every case have utilised economic laws in so doing. It is not something abstract, an economic law, which brings about social changes: it is people, by their associated actions, who bring about social changes, in accordance with economic laws and by utilising economic laws.

This utilisation of economic laws raises a number of problems and is subject to a number of conditions.

(1) The utilisation of economic laws by people in society is itself always determined by economic interests. In society divided into hostile classes, the varying utilisation of economic laws always takes place in accordance with varying class interests. The utilisation of economic laws in class society always and everywhere has a class background to it.”<sup>1</sup> Thus when the bourgeoisie headed the movement of the people to overthrow feudal rule, and replaced feudal property by capitalist property and serfdom by wage-slavery, they took the fullest advantage of economic laws for the furtherance of their own class interests. They utilised these laws. In particular, they utilised to the full the fact that the development of production required capitalist rather than feudal forms of property.

Similarly, when the workers rise against capitalism, they also take the fullest advantage of economic laws and utilise these laws. They utilise to the full the fact that now the further development of production requires that the means of production be turned into public property and that capitalist ownership has involved the capitalists in numerous difficulties.

In general, in class society economic laws are utilised by definite classes in furtherance of definite class interests. They are

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

utilised by one class against another class.

And so it also follows that the possibility of utilising economic laws is limited, so far as a particular class is concerned, by the objective conditions of economic development. How far and in what way a particular class can utilise economic laws in its own interests depends upon the given economic conditions; the same class which at one time could take the fullest advantage of the operation of economic laws in order to press forward its own interests, at a later time loses this possibility and finds that the advantage belongs to a different class.

(2) In the long run, people's utilisation of economic laws has always served the purpose of the material progress of society and of advancing society to a higher stage of development. But in class society this has never been effected smoothly and by general agreement, but only by means of class struggle and by overcoming the resistance of the reactionary classes.

In class society there has always been a progressive class which has led the way in the utilisation of economic laws to advance the material progress of society, while other, reactionary, classes have always resisted it. This has been because the material class interests of the one class were served by such utilisation of economic laws, while the material class interests of the other classes were preserved only in proportion as they succeeded in resisting it.

For example, at one time the bourgeoisie led the way in the utilisation of economic laws for advancing the material progress of society, while the feudal elements strove to prevent this; they strove to resist the utilisation of economic laws against themselves, and to circumvent the consequences harmful to their own interests. Now it is the bourgeoisie themselves who resist the utilisation of economic laws to carry society forward to a new stage.

Of course, it is quite possible for one class to *resist the utilisation* of economic laws by another class. What they cannot do is to *prevent the operation* of economic laws.

Thus the capitalist class today resists the coming about of the transition from capitalism to socialism. But they cannot prevent the law that the relations of production must correspond to the character of the forces of production from continuing to operate.

So long as capitalism lasts, the contradiction between social production and private, capitalist appropriation must continue to give rise to its inevitable consequences; and whatever the capitalists do, they cannot prevent the recurring crises of the capitalist system. All they can do is to try to throw the burden of the crises on to the backs of the working people—but this only makes the crises more severe. Thus their efforts to resist the constructive utilisation of economic laws only means that these laws continue to operate with destructive effects.

In this way we see that economic laws operate in favour of one class and against another class.—For this reason we can be sure that in the end the working class will be victorious, since it is the progressive class in capitalist society in whose favour economic laws are operating—“history is on our side”, as it is sometimes expressed. But its victory may be postponed owing to its own disunity or mistaken policies, and owing to the strength of the capitalist resistance.

(3) While the utilisation of economic laws is always determined by class interests, their utilisation by the working class in its struggle for socialism nevertheless gives the whole process a new character.

“The difference in this matter between the proletariat and other classes which at any time in the course of history revolutionised the relations of production,” wrote Stalin, “consists in the fact that the class interests of the proletariat merge with the interests of the overwhelming majority of society, because the proletarian revolution implies the abolition not of one or other form of exploitation, but of all exploitation, while the revolutions of other classes, which abolished only one or other form of exploitation, were confined within the limits of their narrow class interests, which conflicted with the interests of the majority of society.”<sup>1</sup>

With the working class and its struggle for socialism, it is no longer a case of utilising economic laws in the exclusive interest of a class which seeks to establish itself in a position where it can exploit the rest of society, but of utilising economic laws for ending all exploitation and satisfying the needs of all the people. For

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*



to realise the interest of the working class by ending capitalist exploitation means the ending of all exploitation, the abolition of class antagonisms and the institution of a social order, socialism, in which social production is carried on for the common benefit of all.

When socialism is established, then the whole economic life of society is eventually brought under conscious, planned control to satisfy people's needs. Economic laws continue to operate; and if the builders of socialism fail to recognise this fact and begin to violate the economic laws of socialism, then the only result can be that their plans will fail. But it is then no longer a matter of the utilisation of economic laws to serve a particular interest, but of their utilisation for the common interest of the whole of society—since antagonistic classes and conflicting interests have been finally done away with.

(4) When people utilise economic laws to advance their exclusive class interests, this does not mean that they must first possess exact, scientific knowledge of those laws. People could use fire to cook their food while they still possessed very little knowledge of the laws of physics, and could give only fantastic and mythological accounts of such phenomena as fire. It is the same with economic laws. When an exploiting class—the bourgeoisie, for example—utilised economic laws to wrest domination of society from a rival exploiting class, they were far from possessing exact, scientific knowledge of the laws of the economic processes which they set in motion. They understood these processes only from the point of view of their own narrow class interests, which meant that they entertained many illusions about them.

There is, in fact, a great difference between blindly taking advantage of economic laws and so utilising them, and utilising them with full understanding. The latter condition only begins to be realised in the case of the utilisation of economic laws not for a narrow class interest but in the interest of the overwhelming majority of society. It only begins to be realised today, in the conditions of the working-class struggle for socialism.

Similarly, there is a difference between men utilising certain laws of their social organisation in pursuit of a class interest, and their being the real *masters* of their social organisation. To be the

real masters of their social organisation they must, first, possess full understanding of its laws, and second, have established such social control over all the sectors of economy that they can utilise its laws in accordance with a social plan. These conditions are only realised when society advances to the stage of socialism.

(5) When people have at last become the real masters of their social organisation, then a position is reached in which the operation of economic laws, far from limiting or restricting their social action, frustrating their aims and purposes and leading to unintended consequences, becomes the condition for unrestricted social action to satisfy the material and cultural needs of the whole of society. For then people are able to know and understand these laws and to utilise them in a planned way for the benefit of each and all.

“The forces operating in society work exactly like the forces operating in nature: blindly, violently, destructively, so long as we do not understand them and fail to take them into account,” wrote Engels. “But when once we have come to know them and understand how they work, their direction and their effects, the gradual subjection of them to our will and the use of them for the attainment of our aims depend entirely upon ourselves.

“This is especially true of the mighty productive forces of the present day,” he continued. “So long as we obstinately refuse to understand their nature and their character—and the capitalist mode of production and its defenders set themselves against any such attempt—these forces operate in spite of us, against us, dominate us. . . . But once their nature is grasped, in the hands of the producers working in association they can be transformed from demoniac masters into willing servants. . . .

“Such treatment of today’s productive forces in accordance with their nature, now become known at last, opens the way to the replacement of the anarchy of social production by a socially planned regulation of production in accordance with the needs both of society as a whole and of each individual.”<sup>1</sup>

We can conclude that in accordance with their economic interests people can and do utilise economic laws for their own purposes. In all great periods of social change there has been a

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.

progressive class which was able, because of its economic position and in pursuit of its own material interests, to utilise economic laws to revolutionise the social economy and carry it to a higher stage. And finally, in the working-class struggle for socialism, and with the victory of socialism, people are able to know and understand the laws of their own social organisation and to utilise them with full consciousness to satisfy the requirements of the whole of society.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE SOCIAL SUPERSTRUCTURE

Views and institutions play an active role in social development as means whereby the given social-economic basis is developed and consolidated. They do not come into being and develop independently, but as a superstructure which arises on the basis of the given relations of production.

Hence in society there is always a basis and a superstructure. The economic structure is the basis, while the superstructure consists of the views and institutions of society. The development of the basis is regulated by objective laws independent of the will of man, and the superstructure, created by men's conscious activities, is a product of the basis and changes when the basis changes. Each basis has its corresponding superstructure.

Marxism requires, however, that the superstructure shall not be deduced directly from its basis, but that we shall in every case study the development of a particular superstructure in detail, taking into account its interaction with its basis and the detailed historical determination of the form taken by its various elements.

#### *The Views and Institutions of Society*

The materialist conception of history, wrote Engels, "seeks the ultimate cause and great moving power of all important historical events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the mode of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggle of these classes against one another."<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental law of social change is the law which governs the changes in the mode of production. By this law the relations of production must necessarily conform to the character of the forces of production. Through the operation of this law the growth of the forces of production comes into conflict with the existing relations of production, leading to social revolution, to

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction.

the fall of the old system of relations of production and the creation of a new system, to the overthrow of the old ruling class and the coming to power of a new class.

But “in considering such transformations,” wrote Marx, “a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic and philosophic— in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production.”<sup>1</sup>

For instance, at the close of the Middle Ages many people were prepared to die for the sake of the new Protestant religion, and fierce religious conflicts and wars took place. But were they really fighting only for their ideas? Out of the religious wars arose new states and ultimately the establishment and consolidation of capitalist society. The urge to new ideas arose as a result of the formation of new relations of production and new classes, and people became conscious of conflicts based on economic contradictions as conflicts of new ideas and ideals against old ones.

Again, in Britain the new bourgeoisie at the time of the civil war fought for the sovereignty of parliament against the king. They fought for the establishment of parliamentary institutions and parliamentary government against royalist institutions. The civil war was fought as a war for parliament against royalty, and likewise as a war of puritans against churchmen. But the real content of the war was a fight of the bourgeoisie for power. The bourgeoisie controlled parliament, it was their institution, used by them in the fight against royalty. And when they did establish parliamentary government, it led to the creation of conditions for the unfettered development of manufacture and commerce.

In general, the struggles about the ideas and institutions of

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, Preface

society are struggles through which people become conscious of their economic conflicts and fight them out—through which people on the one hand defend and on the other hand strive to end a given system of production relations. Such conflicts ultimately arise from contradictions between the social forces of production and the relations of production, which necessitate the development of new relations of production. But it is through struggles about institutions and ideas that the conflicts are fought out and economic development effected.

Hence in considering the development of society we have not only to consider the basic development of the mode of production and the economic conflicts which in the last analysis determine this development. We have also to consider the way in which people, in their conscious social activity, “become conscious of this conflict and fight it out”. We have to consider, in short, the development of the *views* and *institutions* of society. For it is through the development of social ideas and views, and of institutions corresponding to their views, that people carry on their social life and fight out the conflicts arising from it.

In considering the views and institutions of society, then, we must be guided by two main facts.

(1) Views and institutions play an active role in social development. They often appear to those who hold the views and direct the institutions as though they were an end in themselves—as though the social purpose of developing various views were simply to instruct people as to the truth, and as though the social purpose of developing various institutions were simply to make people lead a good and moral life. But whatever people may think about their views and institutions, we must pay attention to what those views and institutions actually do, what social role they actually fulfil. Then we shall discover that views and institutions play an active role in society, as means whereby a given social-economic formation is developed and consolidated or, alternatively, whereby it is overthrown and supplanted by another, as means whereby definite classes give expression to and realise their social aims, and whereby the class struggle is fought out.

Consequently views and institutions are always developed corresponding to the active social role which in different periods they are required to fulfil; and new views and institutions arise in

opposition to old ones, corresponding to the development of the class struggle.

(2) Views and institutions, therefore, do not come into being and develop independently of the economic life of society. They are not created by the arbitrary actions of “great men”, though the personalities of great men may influence them! They are not to be explained as expressions of “national character, though national character may modify them. They are not products of purely spiritual processes going on in men’s minds. On the contrary, the basis of views and institutions—of laws and forms of government, of men’s entire ideological and spiritual activity—lies in the conditions of material life of society, in the sphere of economic relations, in the sphere of class interests and class struggles.

The development of views and institutions, therefore, is in the last analysis determined by the development of the mode of production. And they play an active role in serving to shape and consolidate the economic basis of society, and also in the struggle to do away with old economic conditions and create new ones.

### *Social Being and Social Consciousness*

We have seen that men enter into relations of production independent of their will. The different economic formations of society take shape according to regular laws which operate with objective necessity independent of the will of man, and similarly the mutual exchange of activities within the economic system is regulated by objective laws operating independent of the will of man.

For this reason, the whole basic economic development of society can, as Marx said, “be determined with the precision of natural science”.

According to idealist conceptions of history, as opposed to the materialist conception, the primary, determining factor in social development is to be found in the views and institutions of society. According to the idealists, first men develop certain views, then they create institutions corresponding to those views, and on that basis they carry on their economic life. In this way they place things exactly upside down. They put everything on its head. For instead of the views and institutions of society develop-

ing on the basis of the material life of society, they say that material life develops on the basis of views and institutions.

So long as "ideological forms" are regarded as being the determining element in the development of society it is impossible to obtain any scientific picture of social development, that is, of its development according to regular laws. For if the changing ideas and motives operating in social life are considered by themselves, as an independent sphere, then it is impossible to discover regular laws governing their development. In that case, as a certain eminent English historian has put it, "there can be only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the very possibility of a scientific treatment of social phenomena, of a science of society, is ruled out. It is only when we turn to the economic basis that we come to the sphere of operation of regular laws independent of the will of man. And having made that discovery, we can then also discover the hidden laws which operate in the apparently unregulated development of the superstructure.

"Marx . . . was the first to put sociology on a scientific footing," wrote Lenin, "by establishing the concept of the economic formation of society as the sum total of relations of production, and by establishing the fact that the development of these formations is a process of natural history."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, people do have ideas and do always act consciously. And the views and institutions of society, in contrast to the basic production relations, are not and cannot be formed independent of their will. On the contrary, they are precisely the products of human thought and will, in a word, of consciousness. Here, therefore, we are no longer considering laws operating independent of the will of man, but are considering precisely the sphere of operation of the will of man.

Thus Lenin pointed out that there are "ideological social relations" which "before taking shape pass through people's consciousness", as well as "material social relations", which "take

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<sup>1</sup> The Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Europe*, Preface.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats*, ch. 1.



shape without passing through men's consciousness".<sup>1</sup>

In other words, we must always distinguish, on the one hand the production relations, which constitute the basis of human association and take shape independently of people's consciousness; and on the other hand, social consciousness itself, the views which take shape in men's minds, and the institutions which they set up in accordance with their views.

All the views which men formulate, and the institutions which they set up corresponding to their views, are formulated and set up by them on the basis of the given economic structure of society, and of the conflicting interests which arise within that economic structure.

"Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these," wrote Marx and Engels. "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence."<sup>2</sup>

Consciousness is always the consciousness of particular people, whose manner of life is determined for them—since they are born into a definite society—by the character of their productive forces and of the corresponding production relations and economic conflicts. And so the views which they formulate in their social intercourse, and the institutions which they set up, depend on and, generally speaking, correspond to the material economic conditions of the society in which they live. "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life."<sup>3</sup> The relations of men with one another and with the means of production into which they enter in the process of social production, determine, in the last analysis, their way of thinking and their whole social organisation.

*Marx's "Capital" as the Demonstration of Historical Materialism*

Lenin pointed out that in *Capital* Marx not only exhaustively analysed the capitalist economic structure and its laws of devel-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part I, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Marx, *loc. cit.*

opment, but he showed how corresponding to its development there arise definite modes of consciousness.

Having, in the 1840's, arrived at the general conception of historical materialism, Marx proceeded to apply, develop and verify it.

"He took one of the economic formations of society—the system of commodity production—and on the basis of a vast mass of data gave a most detailed analysis of the laws governing the functioning of this formation and its development.

"This analysis is strictly confined to the relations of production between the members of society. Without ever resorting to factors other than relations of production to explain the matter, Marx makes it possible to discern how the commodity organisation of social economy develops, how it becomes transformed into capitalist economy. . . .

"Such is the 'skeleton' *Capital*. But the whole point of the matter is that Marx did not content himself with this skeleton,... that while explaining the structure and development of the given formation of society exclusively in terms of relations of production, he nevertheless everywhere and always went on to trace the superstructure corresponding to these relations of production, and clothed the skeleton in flesh and blood. . . .

"*Capital* . . . exhibited the whole capitalist social formation to the reader as a live thing—with its everyday aspects, with the actual social manifestation of the antagonism of classes inherent in the relations of production, with the bourgeois political superstructure which preserves the domination of the capitalist class, with the bourgeois ideas of liberty, equality and so forth, with the bourgeois family relations."<sup>1</sup>

*Capital* demonstrated, by the close, scientific study of a particular formation of society, how the production relations develop, and how an entire superstructure of views and institutions develops on the basis of the production relations.

Lenin therefore concluded that, "Since the appearance of *Capital*, the materialist conception of history is no longer a hypothesis, but a scientifically demonstrated proposition."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *What the "Friends of the People" Are*, etc., ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

*The Superstructure as Product of an Economic Basis*

Historical materialism, then, having established the general laws which govern the development of the mode of production, further establishes the laws which govern the formation, change and development of the views and institutions of society.

In society there is always a basis and a superstructure.

“The basis is the economic structure of society at the given stage of development. The superstructure is the political, legal, religious, artistic, philosophical views of society, and the political, legal and other institutions corresponding to them.”<sup>1</sup>

Corresponding to the development of a given social- economic formation, of a given system of production relations, a given basis, there necessarily arises a system of views and institutions *peculiar to that basis*, which are the *dominant* views and institutions of society so long as that basis is maintained. This is the superstructure.

The superstructure *corresponds* to the basis, is its *product*, and *serves* its consolidation and development. It consists of those views and institutions which are the dominant views and institutions of society so long as the given basis exists, and which owe their predominance precisely to the existence of the given basis.

In other words, on the given basis there is created a whole system of ideas, social organisations and institutions which serve to maintain, consolidate and develop that basis. Naturally, other ideas and other organisations eventually arise on the basis of what is newly developing in the social economy, namely, the revolutionary ideas and organisations of the classes which are hostile to the existing economic structure. Such ideas and organisations do not serve to maintain, consolidate and develop the basis, but, on the contrary, to undermine it and eventually to replace it by a different economic structure. They eventually contribute to the formation of a new superstructure, when the old basis is eliminated.

For example, in capitalist society there exist state and other institutions and dominant ideas which serve to maintain the capitalist system. The capitalist class has in fact built up a whole su-

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Concerning Marxism in Linguistics*.

perstructure of views and institutions which serve the capitalist system. Such a superstructure is a powerful, active force in society. Against it arise socialist ideas and organisations, which serve the struggle to end capitalism and to replace it by socialism.

The concept of basis and superstructure relates, therefore, to the characteristic feature of the development of ideas and institutions, that corresponding to different bases a different superstructure of dominant views and institutions is formed.

The superstructure is an extremely complex social formation. Many factors influence its actual development and its varying forms in every period. There are ceaseless interactions between the various elements of the superstructure and between them all and the basis. But taking all this into account, the fact remains that the production of a superstructure on a given economic basis is a universal law of social development.

“What else does the history of ideas prove,” wrote Marx and Engels, “than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed?”<sup>1</sup> The superstructure is a product of its basis. And this basis consists of the economic structure of society, the sum total of the relations of production. It must here be stressed that it is the relations of production, and not the productive forces, which are the basis on which the superstructure arises.

Changes in production, in technique, do, of course, influence the intellectual life of society and the form of its institutions. They influence them in many ways, including the profound influence which scientific discoveries have on social ideas. But the nature of the dominant views and institutions of society always depends on the type of economic structure. The ways in which changes in production technique and scientific discoveries receive expression in the views and institutions of society depends upon the type of production relations.

“The superstructure is not directly connected with production, with man’s productive activity. It is connected with production only indirectly, through the economy, through the basis.”<sup>2</sup>

Under capitalism, for example, power-driven machine has

<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

been developed. But the basis of the typical views and institutions of capitalist society lies in the capitalist relations of production. When the capitalist production relations are abolished and socialist relations established, power-driven machinery remains; but the views and institutions which were based on the capitalist relations do not remain, but give place to different views and institutions based on socialist relations of production.

If, for example, at the present time certain famous scientists are saying that progress is an illusion and that the advance of technology only creates new problems and difficulties for mankind, this view is certainly not based on the technological developments to which it refers. It is based on the fact that capitalism cannot find a peaceful and creative use for those developments. Hence such views are typical views which arise on the basis, not of production, but of obsolescent capitalist production relations. Very different views about the significance of technological development are held when capitalist production relations are abolished and socialism established. Then the view is that mankind can go on using technological advances to satisfy the ever-growing material and cultural requirements of the whole of society.

This shows, incidentally, that it is wrong to refer to contemporary society as “an industrial age” or “an age of science”, as though the typical features of social life, the views and institutions of contemporary society, were based on the growth of industrial techniques or of science. On the contrary, in the capitalist countries the growth of technique and science receives expression in views and institutions only through the medium of the capitalist production relations, while in socialist society it receives expression through the medium of socialist production relations. Hence the so-called “age of science” gives rise to very different views, very different institutions and a very different social outlook according as to whether science is subordinated to capitalist or socialist purposes.

“The superstructure therefore reflects changes in the level of development of the productive forces not immediately and not directly, but only after changes in the basis, through the prism of the changes wrought in the basis by the changes in production.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

*The Superstructure Changes with the Basis*

Since the superstructure is thus a product of the economic basis, it follows that it also changes with the basis. The type of views and institutions to be observed in any society always corresponds to the type of economic structure of that society. In this way, the superstructure, being a product of the basis, reflects the basis.

“Every basis has its corresponding superstructure. The basis of the feudal system has its superstructure, its political, legal and other views, and the corresponding institutions; the capitalist basis has its own superstructure; so has the socialist basis. If the basis changes or is eliminated, then following after this its superstructure changes or is eliminated; if a new basis arises, then following after this a superstructure arises corresponding to it.”<sup>1</sup>

The superstructure, therefore, can be no more permanent than its basis. The views and institutions which are typical of a given epoch always prove transitory and short-lived, since they do not outlive the economic system of which they are products and which they reflect.

“The superstructure is the product of one epoch, an epoch in which the given economic basis exists and operates. The superstructure is therefore short-lived; it is eliminated and disappears with the elimination and disappearance of the given basis.”<sup>2</sup>

That is why we can distinguish, for example, capitalist views and institutions from feudal views and institutions, and socialist views and institutions from capitalist views and institutions. According to feudal views, it was a crime for a serf to leave his lord's estate, and feudal laws were framed accordingly; but according to capitalist views, such feudal dependence was a gross restriction of the liberty of the individual. According to capitalist views, the capitalist has a perfect right to the profits he makes by employing workers, and capitalist institutions are designed to let him go on enjoying that right; but according to socialist views, no man should live by exploiting the labour of others, and “he who does not work, neither shall he eat”.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

*Contradictions in the Superstructure*

Since in every period the ideas and institutions of society are products of the economic structure of society in that period, it follows that contradictions are always arising in the sphere of ideas and institutions, because contradictions are always arising in economic life. Hence the superstructure which arises on the basis is never an integral, self-consistent whole. It always contains contradictions and there is always a struggle going on in the sphere of the superstructure. The contradictions and struggles which arise in the sphere of ideas and institutions, in the sphere of the superstructure, are, in the last analysis, reflections of the contradictions and struggles in the sphere of economic life, in the basis.

To a given economic basis there correspond typical struggles and controversies in the sphere of its superstructure, through which the superstructure develops, through which the political and ideological life of society is carried on. With a new basis, new controversies take the place of the old ones. Thus, for example, the great controversies which raged over ideas and institutions in the Middle Ages are out of date today, in capitalist society. For us, they are mostly settled, and we have different controversies. When socialism triumphs, typical controversies of capitalist society are also superseded, and new controversies arise.

When the basis is one on which society is divided into antagonistic classes, then the chief controversies in the sphere of the superstructure are those reflecting the class struggle which develops on the basis. Of course, the ruling and possessing classes themselves are continually involved in contradictions and difficulties, which receive expression in ideological and political controversies. But the chief controversies are those which arise from new views and demands for new institutions being put forward in opposition to the ideas and institutions which are supported by the ruling and possessing classes. At the same time, there are also controversies with the relics of old views and old institutions left over from the past.

The typical development of the superstructure on the basis, therefore, is the development through struggles and controversies reflecting the contradictory social aims and interests which arise on the given basis. Ideas and institutions take shape and develop

through such struggles and controversies.

Should we therefore say that the superstructure which corresponds to a given economic basis includes also views which do not correspond to that basis—namely, the dying views which corresponded to a former basis, and the rising views which reflect the struggle for a new basis? Should we say, for example, that outmoded feudal views or, on the other hand, socialist views, are part of the capitalist superstructure, because the former linger on and the latter arise in capitalist society?

No, we should only confuse ourselves by saying this. The superstructure which arises on a given economic basis consists of the typical views and institutions corresponding to that basis—for example, the typical feudal, capitalist or socialist views and institutions corresponding to feudal, capitalist or socialist production relations. Views which linger on from an old basis, or views which prepare the fight for a new basis, are respectively the relics of an old superstructure and the rising, formative elements of a new superstructure. Relics of the old superstructure linger on, and formative elements of a new superstructure arise on the existing basis, because on that basis—thanks to its contradictions—a struggle continues to eliminate the old basis and a struggle also begins to pass onwards to a new basis. Hence the typical superstructure of ideas and institutions corresponding to the given economic basis develops through such controversies. It finally eliminates the old basis, and also is itself finally eliminated, through such controversies.

Further, the elimination of an old superstructure along with its basis is not to be interpreted as meaning that *everything* in the views and institutions of society, everything in politics, law, religion, art or philosophy, is periodically scrapped and a new beginning made. As we know, this is not what happens. What the elimination of an old superstructure and the formation of a new superstructure means is rather that in all departments of the superstructure new views arise and old views are discredited and disappear, while at the same time everything positively achieved in the period of the old views and institutions is retained, utilised and further developed in terms of the new views and institutions.

Thus, for example, much of the old Roman law in Europe was retained and utilised in the development of bourgeois law:



the rise of a new economic basis and the fall of the old basis has not meant, in the sphere of law, abolishing all old laws out of hand and making a fresh start with entirely new ones. And why is this? It is because the Roman law contained much that is of value for regulating men's relationships not only in slave society but in any commodity-producing society based on private property.

Similarly, while certain views expressed in, say, Greek art belonged to slave society and have disappeared, the products of that art have not disappeared, and are not likely to disappear, but are still appreciated and utilised and constitute a permanent heritage and influence in the development of art. This is because Greek art gave expression not only to special aspects of life and human relationships in slave society but to universal aspects of life and human relationships in any society. It is also because Greek art made a permanent contribution to artistic technique. For these reasons, incidentally, Greek art is likely to survive much longer than Roman law, since while Roman law will have nothing but a purely historical interest left in communist society, Greek art will still retain a living interest.

#### *Historical Materialism versus "Vulgar Marxism"*

From what has already been said it should be evident that in the actual history of any given people, of any particular epoch, the way in which the superstructure arises on the basis, and the explanation of the development of the various elements of the superstructure on the basis, is by no means a simple matter.

The law that the dominant views and institutions of society correspond to the given type of economic structure of society is not to be interpreted in a mechanistic way. The complex superstructure of views and institutions is not an automatic product, but is the result of people's conscious activities and struggles. The point is, that these conscious activities operate on the basis of the given production relations within which people live. On the basis of the given form of economic association, of the given class structure and class relationships, views are formed and institutions established as a result of enormously complex processes which are the sum of the conscious activities of individuals.

Society, like everything else, must be studied concretely, in its actual complex development. "There is no such thing as ab-

stract truth, truth is always concrete.” Therefore it is certainly not Marxism, just as it is certainly not science, to attempt to conclude from the specification of certain economic conditions what the form of the superstructure arising on that basis is going to be, or to deduce every detailed characteristic of the superstructure from some corresponding feature of the basis. On the contrary, we need to study how the superstructure actually develops in each society and in each epoch, by investigating the facts about that society and that epoch.

Quite a few vulgarisers of Marxism—some calling themselves “Marxists”, others serving out absurd travesties of Marxism in order to “refute” it—have represented Marxism as saying that every idea and institution in society is directly produced by and serves some immediate economic need. Of such vulgarisers Engels reports that Marx himself used to say: “All I know is that I am not a Marxist.”<sup>1</sup>

In his correspondence after Marx’s death, Engels stressed that:

“Our conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever of construction. . . . All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined in detail, before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-legal, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc., notions corresponding to them. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

Engels repeatedly stresses the need to examine concretely in every case the way in which particular views and institutions arise and take shape on the basis of given economic development, and the influence which they in turn exert upon the further development of society and ultimately upon the development of the economy.”

He expressly warns against misunderstandings arising from the manner in which he and Marx had occasionally presented the theory.

“Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise this main principle in op-

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Letter to C. Schmidt*, Aug. 5, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

position to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights.

“But when it was a case of presenting a section of history, that is, of a practical application,” Engels adds, “it was a different matter, and there no error was possible.”<sup>1</sup>

“We . . . laid and were bound to lay, the main emphasis at first on the derivation of political, juridical and other ideological notions, and of the actions arising through the medium of these notions, from basic economic facts,” he writes in another letter. “But in so doing we neglected the formal side—the way in which these notions come about—for the sake of the content. This has given our adversaries a welcome opportunity for misunderstanding.”<sup>2</sup>

### The Interaction of Superstructure and Basis

There are two points here of great importance.

In the first place, Engels underlines the common misunderstanding of historical materialism, “the fatuous notion . . . that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history, we also deny them any effect upon history. . . . These gentlemen often almost deliberately forget that once an historical element has been brought into the world by other elements, ultimately by economic facts, it also reacts in its turn and may react on its environment and even on its own causes.”<sup>3</sup>

The political institutions and laws of a country, for example, are products of the existing economic conditions, and it is impossible to understand their origin and development apart from the economic basis. But it is sufficiently obvious that the political institutions and laws, which come into being on the basis of economic relations, have a very pronounced influence on the actual course of historical events, on the whole life of the country, including its economic life. Thus modern British parliamentary institutions are undoubtedly products of the capitalist system in Britain. But that does not mean that the institution of parliament

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Letter* to J. Bloch, September 21, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Letter* to F. Mehring, July 14, 1893.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

and what it does is of no importance. On the contrary, we know that Acts of Parliament have very great effect, not only in the political sphere, but in the economic sphere as well. To suggest the contrary would be indeed “a fatuous notion”.

“According to the materialist conception of history,” wrote Engels, “the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than that neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure. . . , also exercise their influence on the course of the historical struggle, and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*.”<sup>1</sup>

“We regard economic conditions as the factor which ultimately conditions historical development. . . . Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic condition is the *cause* and *alone active*, while everything else is only a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself.”<sup>2</sup>

#### *Historical Determination of the Form of Views and Institutions*

In the second place, Engels emphasises that while, in general, views and institutions are products of economic conditions, the exact form which they take in a particular country at a particular period cannot be explained exclusively from the economic conditions of that country at that period. On the contrary, while the influence of economic development always ultimately asserts itself, the form which views and institutions take at any time must always depend on a variety of particular factors in a country’s life, including the character and traditions of its people, the personalities of its leading men, and, above all, its past history.

Considering, for example, the development of legal ideas,

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Letter* to J. Bloch, September 21, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Letter* to H. Starkenburg, January 25, 1894.

Engels points out that while legal ideas always reflect existing economic conditions, “the form in which this happens can, however, vary considerably. It is possible, as happened in England, in harmony with the whole national development, to retain in the main the forms of the old feudal laws while giving them a bourgeois content; in fact, directly giving a bourgeois meaning to the old feudal name. But, also, as happened in Western continental Europe, Roman law, the first world law of a commodity-producing society . . . can be taken as a foundation. . . . After the great bourgeois revolution, such a classic law code as the French *Code Civil* can be worked out on the basis of this same Roman Law. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Thus in these cases legal conceptions and codes of law arose, not as a direct product of economic conditions, but by a process of working upon and adapting the *already existing* legal conceptions and codes, which belonged to a past epoch, into forms suitable for the new epoch.

It has been the same, Engels points out, with philosophy. “I consider the ultimate supremacy of economic development established . . . but it comes to pass within conditions imposed by the particular sphere itself: in philosophy, for instance, through the operation of economic influences (which again generally act only through political, etc., disguises) upon the existing philosophic material handed down by predecessors.”<sup>2</sup>

The actually existing views and institutions of a country, therefore, cannot be deduced directly from the economic conditions of that country at a particular time. “Economy creates nothing absolutely new,” said Engels, “but it determines the way in which existing material of thought is altered and further developed.”<sup>3</sup>

What is of fundamental importance in the consideration of the development of views and institutions is, then, simply that they do not have an independent development, but arise and develop on the basis of the economic development of society. The

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, ch. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Letter to C. Schmidt*, October 27, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

problem always remains of determining the peculiarities of the development of views and institutions in each particular country, and what role they play in each particular period of its history. This problem can never be solved by means of general formulas alone, but only in the light of the facts themselves.

In short, when it is a matter, not of the abstract enunciation of general principles, but of the application of these principles in the elucidation of particular historical processes, then the detailed study of the actual mode of derivation of views and institutions on the basis of economic conditions, and of the active role they play in the development of events, cannot be neglected. And Marx himself has provided classic examples of this application in his historical writings.

In *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, for example, he shows in detail how particular views and institutions, political parties, political conflicts and trends of ideas, arose on the basis of definite economic and class relations in French society in the mid-19th century, and how the ensuing struggles in the realms of politics and ideology influenced the fate of the French economy and of the various classes.

Such detailed understanding of the political and ideological factors, their basis and influence, is, of course, vitally important in the analysis made of a present situation with a view to mapping out practical policy. For instance, we cannot arrive at the policy for the working-class movement in a given situation simply from an analysis, however exact, of the economic position. It is necessary to take into account all the existing political factors, in all their complexity, and also the various trends of ideas, and to determine how these not only reflect but influence the economic situation, in order to arrive at a practical policy. For in given economic circumstances, political action, and also ideological struggle generally, has a decisive effect in influencing the further course of economic development, the fate of the various classes and of the whole economy.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## CLASS IDEAS AND CLASS RULE

The superstructure serves its basis by actively helping to shape and consolidate it. In society based on exploitation, the superstructure always reflects and serves the interests of the ruling class, so that the dominant views are those of the ruling class, worked out and upheld by its intellectual representatives.

In revolutionary periods new revolutionary views are formulated and new institutions created by the revolutionary class, which utilises them in its struggle against the forces of the old society.

Marxism teaches us always to look for the class interests behind and motivating all social principles, institutions and policies, and to recognise the great role played in the transformation of society by new revolutionary ideas and institutions.

*The Superstructure Serves the Basis*

With the establishment of a given economic system as the basis of society, there always develop typical views and institutions corresponding to that basis. What function do such views and institutions fulfil? What is the function of the superstructure in relation to its basis?

Just as people could not carry on production without entering into definite relations of production, so those relations of production could not be maintained and consolidated without the appropriate views and institutions.

The superstructure, wrote Stalin, “becomes an exceedingly active force, actively assisting its basis to take shape and consolidate itself. . . . The superstructure is created by the basis precisely in order to serve it, to actively help it take shape and consolidate itself, to actively strive for the elimination of the old, moribund basis together with its old superstructure.”<sup>1</sup>

With the establishment of a given economic basis, therefore, there is always created a superstructure of views and institutions

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Concerning Marxism in Linguistics*.

which are adapted to serve the development and consolidation of that basis. This superstructure is created in controversy and struggle by the class whose interest it is to establish and consolidate the particular economic system. The superstructure is thus established to serve the basis, by actively helping to shape and consolidate it.

Thus to carry on social production and to maintain, consolidate and develop the corresponding relations of production, it is necessary, in the first place, to have a superstructure of *political* and *legal* views and institutions. The state and the laws serve to defend property and to regulate its use and inheritance. Political and legal views and institutions help to shape and consolidate the social system.

The Romans, for example, to consolidate their slave empire developed first republican institutions to supplant the petty kings of an earlier period, and when these institutions proved incapable of holding the social antagonisms in check developed a centralised military dictatorship.

With the decline of slavery and the rise of feudalism, the forms of government changed. The kingdoms, principalities, dukedoms, etc., which were established all over Europe developed precisely as forms of feudal rule, as feudal states, which served to defend, maintain and consolidate the feudal relations.

The rising bourgeoisie came into conflict with the feudal system and with feudal rule, and as a product of their struggle set up national republics, parliamentary states, constitutional monarchies, which allowed free scope to the development of capitalism, defended the interests of the bourgeoisie and so served to shape and consolidate the capitalist basis of society.

Lastly, the working class in its struggle for socialism has to establish a democratic socialist state, which will have the task of eliminating the remnants of capitalism, defending socialist property, and directing the work of socialist construction.

Without such means, the slave economy, for instance, could never have consolidated itself. The same is true of feudal economy, of capitalist economy and of socialist economy. It is only with the help of a state and of political and legal views and institutions that a system of economy takes shape, consolidates itself and eliminates the old economy. The exact form and character of



the state—whether it is a monarchy, like Britain, for instance, or a republic like the U.S.A.—and of the political and legal views and institutions, and the various changes which they undergo, depend on a variety of circumstances in the national life and tradition of each country. Such features are determined historically by the special circumstances arising in each country. But they are always subject to the controlling condition that they serve a particular economic basis, help to shape and consolidate that basis, and to eliminate the old basis.

It is the same with *religions, philosophies, literary and artistic movements*. Society could no more maintain itself and develop without them than it can without politics or without laws. And conversely, they are no more independent of the economic basis than are politics or law. These parts of the superstructure, too, serve the development of the basis by helping it to shape and consolidate itself and to eliminate the old basis.

In the history of philosophy, for example, it is possible to observe how philosophical views have come into prominence from time to time corresponding to the needs of development and consolidation of a particular social system. In this, as Engels observed, “economic influences generally act only through political disguises”.

In the period of the early development of feudalism, for example, Augustine was teaching that the state must be completely subordinate to the church and that temporal affairs must be wholly subordinate to affairs of the spirit. Such teachings certainly helped to finish off the remnants of the military dictatorship of the slave-owners. He did not teach submission to temporal powers; on the contrary, he taught the submission of the temporal powers to another power, and that without this they were unjust. Hundreds of years later another feudal philosopher, Aquinas, was propounding a “realist” philosophy in which material life occupied a much more prominent place, and which allowed to the state an independent sphere of activity. This corresponded to conditions when feudalism was fully consolidated, and it helped that consolidation.

With the rise of the bourgeoisie, new types of philosophy were developed. Philosophers propounded the sovereignty of science and of reason, and from' this point of view subjected the

old feudal ideas to devastating criticism. They examined anew the foundations of knowledge and tried to show how knowledge could be extended and humanity be set upon the road of progress. In this they effectively served the capitalist class in getting rid of feudalism and consolidating capitalism.

Now, when capitalism is in decay and is being challenged by socialism, the bourgeois philosophers have a very different tale to tell. They say that reason is powerless, that knowledge is an illusion, that material progress is a mistake and that the means by which men had hoped to achieve it lead them into difficulties and disasters. These doctrines in turn help to defend the dying system and to stave off the challenge of socialism.

In the same way can be traced out how the medieval songs and stories and religious art, for example, helped the feudal system to take shape and consolidate itself; and how the modern novel, drama, etc., helped to eliminate feudalism, together with feudal views, and helped the capitalist system to shape and consolidate itself.

Naturally, the scientific study of the development of superstructures in the service of their bases is a gigantic task. To carry it out is the task of science in the fields of history, philosophy, religion, art and literature. Here we are merely trying to illustrate what is meant by the superstructure serving the basis. These considerations, however, throw some light upon the anatomy of the superstructure itself.

Developing in order to serve its basis, the superstructure reveals a variety of related formations, each of which fulfils a necessary social function. Of central importance is the development of the state and of political views and state and political institutions. Along with this goes the development of legal views, of laws and legal institutions, of the family, etc.; and closely associated, too, the development of moral ideas. Next, we have to consider religious views and religious institutions. And lastly, there is the development of philosophical views, of art and literature, and of a variety of institutions connected with the intellectual and cultural life of society.

All of these constitute different inter-related and interacting parts of the superstructure. Each gives the appearance of independent development, but all arise and develop as related forma-

tions of the superstructure on the economic basis.

### *Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas*

Since the dissolution of primitive communism, society has been divided into antagonistic classes, into exploiters and exploited, these classes themselves being products of the economic development. And corresponding to the economic structure of society at the given stage of development, to the given system of production relations, one or another class has occupied the dominating position in economy and has assumed leadership of society as the ruling class.

The views and institutions, therefore, which reflect the given economic structure of society, reflect the interests of the class whose dominance depends on that economic structure—the interests of the ruling class.

Thus Marx and Engels wrote: “The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.”<sup>1</sup>

The superstructure of views and institutions, which arises as a product of the economic basis, and reflects that economic basis, is, then, always the product of the domination of a particular class.

“The ruling ideas,” wrote Marx and Engels, “are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling class, therefore the ideas of its dominance.”<sup>2</sup>

Serving the basis is equivalent to serving the ruling class. Ideas and institutions which play an active role in serving to shape and consolidate the economic system in which a particular class is dominant and with the fate of which its fate is bound up, thereby serve that class as weapons and instruments for maintaining and consolidating its rule.

It is always a particular class which plays the leading part in establishing and then in shaping and consolidating a given economic system, in which that particular class is dominant, in which it is the ruling class. It is accordingly always this class

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, Part I, 1

which is primarily responsible for developing the corresponding views—the ruling ideas—and the corresponding institutions. They are developed on the basis of the forms of property and the social relations with which the interests and activities of that class are bound up.

This does not mean that the ruling class develops its own views without consideration of those which it finds already in existence. On the contrary, the views developed at any time by a particular ruling class, and likewise the corresponding institutions, always take as their point of departure the views and institutions previously developed. The peculiar *form* which they are given is generally derived from previously existing forms, but their *content* arises from and reflects the conditions of existence of the particular class at the given time. (In this way there takes place in the development of superstructures a continuous process of old forms being given new content, and then of forms being changed to meet the requirements of content.)

“Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life,” wrote Marx. “The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus it always comes about that “the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”<sup>2</sup>

This ideological domination is, indeed, an essential element in class domination. To maintain its material rule, the ruling class must always maintain its rule over the minds of men. It must bind the intellectual forces of society to itself, and secure the propagation of ideas which, by expressing its dominance, forestall any challenge to that dominance.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, Part I, 1.

*The Role of Intellectuals*

When we speak of the ideas of the ruling class being the ruling ideas, this does not mean, of course, that all the members of the ruling class participate in forming and propagating those ideas. The consolidation of the economic system, and of the system of class rule, always involves that certain individuals undertake, for example, various administrative and executive functions; and similarly certain individuals always come to specialise in an intellectual function.

No more than administrators and officials themselves constitute a class, do intellectuals constitute a class. It is true that such specialised sections do, from time to time, develop vested interests of their own. They become adepts at feathering their own nests and securing special advantages for themselves. This may even, on occasion, as Marx and Engels observed, “develop into a certain opposition and hostility” between them and the chief part of the ruling class. But “in case of a practical collision, in which the class itself is endangered”, this always “automatically comes to nothing.”<sup>1</sup> Intellectuals do not constitute a class, with separate class interests, but function as the intellectual representatives of one or other of the classes which constitute society.

Every class which plays an active as distinct from a merely passive role in social change always finds its own intellectual representatives. And the ruling class has always its cadres of intellectuals, constituting the dominant intellectual force of society at the given period, who elaborate its “sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life”.

That they are in general not conscious of performing this function does not contradict the fact that this is the function they perform.

“Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously indeed, but with a false consciousness,” wrote Engels. “The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him. . . . He works with mere thought material, which he accepts without examination as the product of thought; he does not investigate

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

further for a more remote process independent of thought. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

We find this process strikingly exemplified today. Thinkers with the most diverse views—atheists and devout Christians, social democrats and conservatives—are all impelled to express one and the same point of view, namely, that man is ignorant of his fate and is at the mercy of mysterious forces which he cannot comprehend. What is this but the point of view of the ruling capitalist class in the throes of its final crisis? These thinkers may come from the most diverse social strata, but they all peddle the same views in the service of the ruling class, poisoning the minds of their hearers and readers with the same ideas.

The relation of intellectuals with the class which they represent was defined by Marx in writing about the literary and political representatives of the petty bourgeoisie in the 1848 period in France.

It should not be imagined, he wrote, that these ideologists of the shopkeepers “are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically. This is, in general, the relationship between the political and literary representatives of a class and the class they represent.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus the intellectuals of the ruling class are not necessarily themselves members of that class, in the sense of being born into it, or of enjoying all its privileges. Sometimes, indeed, far from enjoying such privileges they are treated as mere lackeys. For instance, many leading intellectuals of the feudal nobility came from the peasantry, and many leading intellectuals of the capitalist class were drawn from the petty bourgeoisie or even the working class. Indeed, as Marx has pointed out, “the more a ruling class is able to assimilate the most prominent men of a ruled

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Letter to Mehring*, July 14, 1893

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ch. 3.

class, the more solid and dangerous is its rule.”<sup>1</sup>

This process also works in reverse. When a ruling class is in decay, and another class is rising to challenge it, then individuals from its own ranks, including generally some of the most able and intellectually gifted, pass over to serve the rival revolutionary class.

As we have stated, every class which is active in the arena of history finds its own intellectual representatives, who express its social tendencies, its sentiments and views. It is evident, therefore, that in times of profound social change, when all classes are brought into activity, a great creative ferment of ideas always takes place. The intellectual life of such periods expresses, not the activity of one class only, but the ferment of activity of all classes.

It is the task of the class which plays the leading role in shaping the social order not only to formulate and systematise its own ideas, but to secure the acceptance of its ideas by the whole of society. Here revolutionary intellectuals, revolutionary thought and propaganda, have an important role to play. When the old social order is in decline, then the ideas of the ruling class begin to lose their vitality, become incapable of further development, and are more and more rejected by wide sections of people. This is what befell the feudal rulers in their time, it is what has befallen the rulers of the capitalist world today. All the more vigorously do they fight to retain their hold and to use all means at their disposal to discredit and persecute “dangerous” thoughts. The new, rising revolutionary class, on the other hand, in taking the lead of the whole movement against the old system, has to make its own ideas the rallying, mobilising force of the whole movement.

### *The Transformation of the Superstructure*

In those revolutionary periods when the material forces of production come into conflict with the existing relations of production, the entire superstructure, which had developed on the

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol.III, ch. 36.

basis of the existing forms of property and served that basis, begins to be shaken. In such periods, the property relations which had served as forms of development of the material forces of production, turn into their fetters. And in the sphere of social consciousness, in the sphere of the superstructure, this fact expresses itself in consciousness of the dominant views and institutions of society as fetters, in other words, as outmoded, oppressive, unjust, false. New, revolutionary ideas arise.

“When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society,” wrote Marx and Engels, “they do but express the fact that, within the old society, the elements of the new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.”<sup>1</sup>

“The existence of revolutionary ideas presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class.”<sup>2</sup>

The class struggle, by which the social transformation is effected, is based on the conflict of economic interests between classes occupying different places in the system of production relations, each class striving for its own economic interest. It is at basis economic. But it is carried on and fought out in the sphere of politics and law, of religion and philosophy, of literature and art. It is carried on and fought out, not only by means of the economic pressure exerted by one class against another class, and the coercion and violence exerted by one class against another class, but also by means of a conflict of ideas, in which are expressed the tendencies of all classes of society.

“All historical struggles, whether they proceed in the political, religious, philosophical or some other ideological domain, are in fact only the more or less clear expression of the struggles of social classes,” wrote Engels. “. . . The existence of, and collisions between, these classes are in turn conditioned by the degree of development of their economic position.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as, therefore, there is a distinction between the produc-

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, Part I, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Engels, Preface to 3rd German edition of Marx's *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.



tion relations and the corresponding forms of consciousness, so there is a distinction between the material economic interests of the contending classes, for which they are striving, and their consciousness of their aims and of the issues over which they contend. But when the decisive moment of action arrives, the underlying economic interests and aims are always openly revealed.

“As in private life one differentiates between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does,” wrote Marx, “so in historical struggles one must distinguish still more the phrases and fancies of parties from their real interests, their conception of themselves from their reality.... Thus the Tories of England long imagined that they were enthusiastic about Monarchy, the Church and the beauties of the old English Constitution, until the day of danger wrung from them the confession that they are only enthusiastic about ground rent.”<sup>1</sup>

When, as outcome of the class struggle, the old ruling class is overthrown, then, “with the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.”<sup>2</sup>

The upheaval in the economic sphere, in the basic social relations, necessitates an upheaval also throughout the whole sphere of the corresponding ideas and institutions of society, in the whole sphere of social consciousness.

The overcoming of the old by the new is as necessary in the superstructure of views and institutions as in the social basis of production relations. To eradicate the old relations and shape and consolidate the new, a corresponding transformation of views and institutions is necessary. Only by this process of negation can the advances won in the productive process, the progressive advance of society, be consolidated and carried a stage further.

“Men never relinquish what they have won,” wrote Marx. “But this does not mean that they never relinquish the social form in which they have acquired certain productive forces. On the contrary, in order that they may not be deprived of the result attained, and forfeit the fruits of civilisation, they are obliged, from the moment when the form of their intercourse no longer corre-

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.

sponds to the productive forces acquired, to change all their traditional social forms.”<sup>1</sup>

When this change is made, then all the “fruits of civilisation” which had been won in the past period are preserved. They are preserved by the new social forms, whereas they were being destroyed and lost in the process of the decadence and decay of the old social forms. Thus not only the productive forces acquired, but all the advances achieved in culture, are retained, and carried forward in new ways.

We can verify this fact at the present day. The whole heritage of culture acquired during the capitalist period is being threatened in the phase of the decadence of capitalism. It is being claimed, preserved and carried forward in the fight for socialism.

### *Institutions, Ideas and Classes*

What, then, are the principal conclusions to be drawn from the Marxist theory of the basis and superstructure?

The first conclusion is that if the dominant views and institutions of society are products of a definite economic structure, then such views and institutions can no more be regarded as sacrosanct and unchangeable than can the particular social system to which they correspond. They express neither eternal truths nor necessary and inviolable forms of human association. They simply express the outlook and interests corresponding to the given economic structure of society. And in class-divided society, this outlook and these interests can be none other than the outlook and interests of the dominant, exploiting class.

The ancient Greeks, for example, were taught that their laws were instituted by divinely inspired legislators. And so these laws were regarded as sacrosanct, because they were represented as the creations of divinely inspired “great men”. But Marxism shows that in actual fact these laws were the laws of a *slave* society, defining the privileges, rights and duties of the citizens of such a society and defending the property of the possessing classes. They were the expression of definite, historically constituted economic and class interests.

Similarly we today are told that the state institutions of Great

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Letter to Annenkov*, December 28, 1846.

Britain and the United States have come into being as the realisation of Christian ideals, of Western values, of the conception of individual liberty, and so on. And so these institutions and the ideas with which they are associated are represented as sacrosanct, just as quite different institutions and ideas were represented as sacrosanct in the past. But Marxism shows that in actual fact these institutions are institutions of *capitalist* society, based on the capitalist economic system, expressing the interests of the ruling capitalist class. The Christian ideals, Western values, conception of individual liberty are in fact capitalist ideals, capitalist values, a capitalist conception of individual liberty.

Marxism, therefore, by calling attention to the economic, class basis of established institutions and ideas, teaches us to regard no institution and no idea as “sacred”.

“People always were and always will be the stupid victims of deceit and self-deceit in politics,” wrote Lenin, “as long as they have not learned to discover the *interests* of one or another of the classes behind any moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. The supporters of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old, as long as they will not realise that every old institution, however absurd and rotten it may appear, is kept in being by the forces of one or other of the ruling classes. And there is *only one* way of breaking the resistance of these classes, and that is to find, in the very society which surrounds us, and to enlighten and organise for the struggle, the forces which can and, by their social position, *must* form the power capable of sweeping away the old and of establishing the new.”<sup>1</sup>

When the classes discontented with the existing social system begin to take up the struggle against it, then they immediately find themselves confronted with a whole set of institutions, laws, customs, principles and views, which serve to protect the existing system and to suppress opposition to it.

Thus, for example, from the very moment when the British workers began to combine to demand higher wages and shorter hours of work, they found themselves confronted with oppressive laws enacted by oppressive institutions which thwarted their de-

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism*.

mands. They found themselves confronted with a parliament from which they were excluded, by laws which protected the employers, by views which approved the profit-making of the rich while condemning any combination of the poor.

Similarly at an earlier stage, the English bourgeoisie had come into conflict with the royalist regime of King Charles I. Their economic expansion was blocked by royal monopolies and taxes; and when they wanted these removed, they immediately came into conflict with both government and laws, and were denounced by churchmen and scholars for daring to infringe upon "the divine right of kings".

In general, the class which, in pursuit of its material, economic interests, comes into opposition against the ruling class, is thereby always brought into opposition against established institutions and established ideas. The whole record of class struggles proves that the dominant, established ideas and institutions of any society fulfil the role of protecting and upholding the economic structure of that society and, therefore, the interests of the ruling class.

Marxism, then, teaches us always to look for the class, material, economic interests behind and motivating all declarations and principles, all institutions and policies. It teaches us not to respect but oppose views and institutions which serve the capitalist class against the working class, and to fight for new ideas and transformed institutions which will help organise and inspire the broad alliance of all working people, led by the working class, to break the power and overcome the resistance of the capitalists, and build socialist society.

And so the second conclusion to be drawn from the Marxist theory of the basis and superstructure concerns the great and decisive role played in the transformation of society by new, revolutionary ideas and by new institutions.

*Part Three***THE FUTURE:  
SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM**

## CHAPTER NINE

## SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

The basis of socialist society is the social ownership of means of production. The working people are the rulers, there is no exploitation, and the aim of production is satisfaction of human needs.

Socialism is only the first phase of communist society.

The transition from socialism to communism involves the transition (1) from a state in which each receives according to his work to one in which each receives according to his needs; (2) from one in which incentives to labour are still necessary to one in which labour becomes life's prime want; (3) from one in which human capacities are stunted by subordination to division of labour to one in which everyone is able to develop fully all his capacities; (4) from one in which not only public but also co-operative property exists, and in which consequently class differences still exist, to one in which there exists a single association of the whole people which disposes of all the means of production and all products, and in which products are no longer distributed as commodities.

To effect this transition it is necessary (1) to expand social production, (2) to replace commodity circulation by control of the whole product by a single social-economic centre, (3) by shortening the working day, instituting universal polytechnical education and raising material standards, to ensure such a cultural advance as will secure for all the all-round development of all their abilities.

*Social Production and Social Ownership*

Socialism means the establishment of new relations of production, a new economic basis, namely, the social ownership of

the principal means of production.

With such an organisation of production, all exploitation of man by man is finally done away with. This can be realised only as a consequence of the struggle of the working class, together with all the working people, to conquer political power and then to use that power gradually to eliminate all relations of exploitation.

With socialism, capitalist forms of ownership of factories, mills, mines, transport and other means of production are abolished; the entire system of finance and trade is taken out of capitalist hands; the ownership of land by landlords is abolished. After that, no worker is slaving any more for capitalist profit, no small producer is fleeced by landlords, bankers or middlemen. The attack on working-class standards, and the ruin and impoverishment of the majority of the population, resulting from the drive for maximum profits by a few powerful monopolies, is ended. The drive to oppress and exploit other peoples and to force a way into markets, for the sake of maximum profits, is ended. No longer is any productive equipment under-employed because it is not profitable for the capitalists to utilise it fully. No longer are any workers unemployed because it is not profitable for the capitalists to buy their labour-power. No longer is good land made waste by greedy exploitation; no longer is food production neglected, and stocks hoarded or destroyed, while millions are undernourished. There are no more economic crises; for their root cause—that while socialised production expands, the capitalist appropriation of the product renders the mass of people incapable of buying back the goods produced—is done away with. Now, with social ownership of the principal means of production, production relations are established which no longer act as fetters on production, but which facilitate the continuous development of social production in order to satisfy the continually rising requirements of the whole of society.

With socialism, production is no longer undertaken for profit, but for the sake of producing what people need, for the benefit of the whole of society, for the common welfare and for the welfare of each individual. The primary consideration in socialist production is not the profit of a minority but the raising of the standards of the majority.

Socialism is the organisation of plenty. The means to create plenty for all are already in being, thanks to the development of the social forces of production under capitalism. What remains is, by abolishing capitalist ownership and capitalist appropriation, to develop and utilise these forces of production in order to produce plenty for everyone.

In socialist production, when there is not a single exploiter to appropriate the products of the labour of others, the entire social product is disposed of by the producers, and is utilised (*a*) to replace means of production used up, to build reserves and further expand production, (*b*) to carry on and expand the social services, (*c*) to maintain the state and defence forces so long as a socialist country is surrounded by a hostile capitalist world, and (*d*) to provide means of consumption to the individual members of society.

It is in its power to increase the total social wealth that socialism proves its superiority over capitalism.

“Why was it that capitalism smashed and defeated feudalism?” Stalin wrote. “Because it created higher standards of the productivity of labour, it enabled society to procure an incomparably greater quantity of products than could be procured under the feudal system; because it made society richer. Why is it that socialism can, should, and certainly will defeat the capitalist system of economy? Because it can furnish higher models of labour, a higher productivity of labour, than the capitalist system of economy; because it can provide society with more products and can make society richer than the capitalist system of economy can. . . .

“Socialism can succeed only on the basis of a high productivity of labour, higher than under capitalism, on the basis of an abundance of products and of articles of consumption of all kinds, on the basis of a prosperous and cultured life for all members of society.”<sup>1</sup>

And Lenin wrote: “In every socialist revolution . . . there comes to the forefront the fundamental task of creating a social system that is superior to capitalism, viz. raising the productivity

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<sup>1</sup> J Stalin, *Speech at First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites*.

of labour.”<sup>1</sup>

To achieve its aim, then, socialist society must above all equip itself with machines and a machine-building and heavy industry. Such instruments of production have already been created under capitalism. But the great power of socialism, which makes it a social system superior to capitalism, is the power of social labour released from the fetters which compel it to serve private profit.

The socialist drive for higher techniques and higher productivity of labour is not and cannot be carried out as an end in itself. It is undertaken for the sake of raising the standards of the people possessing the techniques, for the sake of “a prosperous and cultured life for all members of society”. Hence just as it is necessary to carry through socialist industrialisation with due regard to the actual means and resources available, so that these are continuously expanded in a planned way and not exhausted, so it is necessary to ensure that the standards of life of the producers will be raised.

Socialist production is regulated by a law of the balance between the two great departments of production—the production of means of production, and the production of means of consumption. It is impossible to expand the second department of production without expanding the first, since production of means of consumption cannot be expanded unless the necessary means of production are provided. At the same time, socialist production cannot succeed unless as a result of it the people’s ever growing requirements are satisfied.

We can conclude, then, that in socialist society the principal means of production are socially owned, the guidance of society and the direction of production is in the hands of the working people, there is no exploitation of man by man, and production is continuously expanded on the basis of higher techniques with the aim of securing the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society.

### *Socialism as Transition from Capitalism to Communism*

When socialism is established, how does society continue to

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*.



develop? Marx showed that after production has been placed on a socialist basis and all exploitation of man by man has disappeared, a further stage of transition begin the transition to communist society.

Hence Marx regarded socialist society not as a permanent social order but as a phase of transition to a higher social order—communism. He regarded it as only “the first phase of communist society”—as the phase of transition from society based on the exploitation of one class by another to classless society.

“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other.” And in this period, the period of socialism, there is “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 emerges.”<sup>1</sup>

“What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the first or lower phase of communist society,” wrote Lenin. “In so far as the means of production become *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. . . . Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of economic ripeness of communism.”<sup>2</sup>

In what respects is socialist society as it emerges from capitalist society still “stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges”? In what respects does it reveal its transitional character? And how are these defects to be got over?

#### *From Recompense for Work to Satisfaction of Needs*

(1) The first respect in which socialism reveals its transitional character is in production itself and in the way the social product is distributed.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, ch. 5, section 4.

Socialism introduces production relations corresponding to the character of the productive forces developed under capitalism and sets out to enlarge the productive forces. But it starts off with the productive forces at the level they have reached under capitalism.

Consequently while the aim of production is the maximum satisfaction of all the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of society, it is for a long time not possible to satisfy fully and equally all the constantly rising needs of every individual. The forces of production are not sufficient to do that.

Hence while the *aim* of socialism certainly implies that eventually every requirement of every individual shall be equally satisfied, this result cannot be realised for a long time, not until an immense advance of production, far away beyond capitalist production, has been realised.

Meantime, individuals receive a share of the social product, not according to the needs of each, but according to the quantity and quality of the *work* each has contributed. Thus each receives, not according to his needs, but according to what he has contributed.

This means, of course, that the needs of all are not equally satisfied. He who does more work, or work of superior quality, receives more. Again, those doing equal work receive the same—but their needs may not be the same: for example, one is married, another not; one has more children to support than another; and so on. Hence their needs are not equally satisfied.

In the phase of socialism, then, production is still restricted and the principle is adopted: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.” But in the higher phase of communism production has been so much enlarged that an entirely different principle operates: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”

Marx regarded the principle of equal pay for equal work—the principle of socialism—as still a hangover of “bourgeois right”. This “bourgeois right” is only finally abolished in fully communist society.<sup>1</sup> Then everyone has equal right to satisfaction of every need.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *loc. cit.*

Of course, the principle of equally satisfying the needs of all implies "an inequality in what each receives, since needs are not equal. It is worth noting, therefore, that the idea that the social product should be equally divided amongst all has nothing to do with either socialism or communism. The social product is always unequally divided, first corresponding to unequal work and then corresponding to unequal needs. The equality which communism brings is the equal opportunity for everyone to develop all his capacities as a many-sided individual.

*From Labour as a Burden to Labour as Life's Prime Want*

(2) A second respect in which socialism reveals its transitional character is in the status of labour and people's attitude to labour.

Under capitalism, the workers sell their labour-power to the capitalists. Labour is therefore a task undertaken for someone else, a burden. It is, in Biblical phrase, "the curse of Adam".

In socialism, labour-power is no longer bought and sold. The producer who receives according to his work is not receiving the price of the labour-power he has sold. He is receiving his share of the social product according to the contribution he has made to social production. And so the more he helps to produce, the more he can receive.

Hence Stalin could already write of labour in the U.S.S.R.:

"Life has improved, comrades. Life has become more joyous. And when life is joyous, work goes well. Hence the high rates of output. . . . Here the working man is held in esteem. Here he works not for the exploiters, but for himself, for his class, for society. Here the working man cannot feel neglected and alone. On the contrary, the man who works feels himself a free citizen of his country, a public figure, in a way. And if he works well and gives society his best—he is a hero of labour and is covered with glory."<sup>1</sup>

However, it is still the case that "incentives" are required for labour. These incentives are provided in socialist society precisely by the principle: "To each according to his work." Each knows that the better he works, the more he will get. At the same

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<sup>1</sup> J Stalin, *loc. cit.*

time, the *social* incentive grows in significance: the worker is “a hero” and is “covered with glory”. He knows he is working “for his class, for society”. And this social incentive grows in significance as the memories of capitalist conditions fade and as the reward of labour increases.

But in the stage of communism, when each receives all he needs, a new attitude to labour must have been generated. Then “labour has become not only a means of life, but life’s prime want”.<sup>1</sup> People contribute “according to ability”, not as a necessity to obtain the means of life, but because to take part in social production is “life’s prime want”. This also presupposes that arduous and dull work has been abolished or at all events reduced to a minimum, and that work has no drudgery about it.

“Productive labour, instead of being a means to the subjection of men, will become a means to their emancipation, by giving each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions”, wrote Engels. “Therefore productive labour will become a pleasure instead of a burden.”<sup>2</sup>

Only with such a status of labour and attitude to it could communist society exist. When each receives no longer according to his work but according to his needs, it is evident that work is no longer carried on as a result of any kind of compulsion, but is carried on because people take pleasure in it, because it is an indispensable part of life.

In capitalist conditions, driven by the lash of economic compulsion, working people sacrifice a third or more of their lives in working for others. A man’s own life begins only when he knocks off work; his working time is lost to him, it is not his own, he is robbed of it. For a privileged few only there is reserved the pleasure of creative work, the consciousness that in their working time they are living their own lives as they wish to live, and not being robbed of life. For the mass of people, their situation is often as Robert Tressell described it:

“When the workers arrived in the morning they wished it was breakfast time. When they started work after breakfast they

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Part III, ch. 3.

wished it was dinner time. After dinner they wished it was one o'clock on Saturday. So they went on, day after day, year after year, wishing their time was over and, without realising it, really wishing that they were dead."<sup>1</sup>

In communism the whole of people's time is restored to them, the whole of their life is their own.

The contrast was pointed by William Morris, in his imaginary conversation in the future communist society. To the question, "How you get people to work when there is no reward of labour," came the answer:

"The reward of labour is life. Is that not enough? Plenty of reward—the reward of creation. The wages which Grod gets, as people might have said time ago. . . . Happiness without daily work is impossible."

And the question "As to how you gained this happiness", was answered:

"Briefly, by the absence of artificial coercion, and the freedom for every man to do what he can do best, joined to the knowledge of what productions of labour we really want."<sup>2</sup>

*From the Stunting of Human Capacities to the All-round Development of All Human Capacities*

(3) A third respect in which socialism reveals its transitional character is in the continued subordination of the individual to the principle of division of labour.

Division of labour is, as we saw earlier, a fundamental feature of the advance of production. It is carried to a very high pitch in modern industry, where co-operative production depends on the division of labour into, and the co-ordination of, a very large number of different labour processes, both physical and mental.

But in society based on exploitation, and in capitalist society in particular, "in the division of labour, man is also divided. All other physical and mental faculties are sacrificed to the development of one single activity." And this represents, as Engels insisted, "a subjection of the producers to the means of production". For "it is not the producer who controls the means

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<sup>1</sup> R. Tressell, *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup> W. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ch. 15.

of production, but the means of production which control the producer.”<sup>1</sup>

Socialism, by instituting social ownership of the means of production, begins to make the worker no longer the servant of the machine, but its master. Associated producers do now control their means of production. Therefore the way is open to overcome the stunting of men’s faculties caused under capitalism by the division of labour. But this is a long process. It involves a thorough-going retraining of labour—to educate and train all-round people, who, masters of their whole production process, are not individually tied to one particular part of it.

Marx pointed out that while the effect of capitalism is to turn the worker into a detail labourer, nevertheless the development of industrial production demands the opposite: it demands well-educated, all-round workers who can take on new jobs corresponding to new technical developments. Modern industry “is continually causing changes not only in the technical basis of production, but also in the function of the labourer, and in the social combination of the labour process”. It therefore “necessitates variation of labour, fluency of function, universal mobility of labour. . . . Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail worker of today, crippled by lifelong repetition of one and the same operation and thus reduced to a mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.”<sup>2</sup>

The fullest scope of industrial development requires such people, but capitalist exploitation strangles them. For such people can flower only as the masters of industry and not as wage-slaves.

In socialism there begins the process of removing the subordination of the individual to division of labour and creating “all-round” individuals. Such people and only such people are the creators of the great new productive forces of communism. In this way, again, socialism is the first stage of communism: in

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, ch. 15, section 9.

socialist production is being created the new man of communist society.

*Abolition of the Essential Distinction between Town and Countryside and between Intellectual and Manual Labour*

The oldest as well as most far-reaching effects of division of labour are the separation of town and countryside, and of intellectual and manual labour.

In capitalist society this amounts to a profound antithesis. The countryside is ruined and impoverished by the development of industry, trade and credit. Intellectual and manual labour are opposed, the former being the function mainly of an elite of representatives of the exploiting class, who help to maintain the subjection and exploitation of the manual workers. The countryside works to support the town, the manual to support the intellectual workers. The antithesis is based on the fact that the town exploits the countryside, the intellectual the manual worker. It expresses, therefore, an antagonism of interests.<sup>1</sup>

In socialism, the *antithesis* of town and countryside, and of intellectual and manual labour, is overcome. For when the whole of production is put on a socialist basis, then it is no longer the case that there exists an antagonism of interests between town and countryside, or between intellectual and manual labour. On the contrary, industry assists the development of agriculture, and town and countryside co-operate. And similarly, intellectuals are no longer in the main representatives of the exploiters, but are drawn from the working people and serve the whole people.

All the same, the effects of the separation of town and countryside and of intellectual and manual labour remain, and must remain, for a long time. They remain, no longer as an antithesis, but as an *essential distinction*.<sup>2</sup> For the countryside is still and must for a long time be economically and culturally backward compared with the town; and it is still true that intellectuals, though drawn from and growing ever closer to the working people, remain as a group distinct from the manual workers: what they do, the latter cannot do, and vice versa.

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<sup>1</sup> See Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*

<sup>2</sup> See Stalin, *loc. cit.*

As socialist production develops, these essential distinctions gradually disappear. Of course, this does not mean that all the *difference* between town and countryside and between intellectual and manual labour is abolished. Naturally, town is different from countryside and brain work is different from hand work—just as, for example, a forest is different from a field, or driving a bus is different from working a lathe. But the *essential* distinctions disappear as the amenities in the countryside are raised to the same level as those in the towns (and as, at the same time, dirt and overcrowding are done away with in towns), and as agriculture becomes as highly equipped technically as industry; and similarly as the level of all workers is raised to that of engineers, technicians and scientists, so that no separate group of specially equipped intellectuals remains.

This entire process is gradually carried through in socialist society, the first phase of communism. The higher phase presupposes its completion, that is, the complete ending of all subordination of people to the division of labour, of all the essential distinction between town and countryside and between intellectual and manual labour.

This means that in communist society, where each receives his needs, where labour is life's prime want, and where all subordination of people to division of labour is ended, the conditions are created for the fullest, uninhibited development of the capacities of every individual. Society no longer imposes limitations on the development of the individual, forcing him into this or that mould in which he shall serve society. On the contrary, social development demands and serves the full individual development of every person. In short, as Marx and Engels said, "we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".<sup>1</sup>

*From Different Forms of Property and Class Differences to a Single Association of the Whole People*

(2) The fourth and final respect in which socialism reveals its transitional character is in the continued existence of different forms of property and of different classes.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.



Socialism, by abolishing all exploitation of man by man, abolishes all exploiting classes and, with them, all class antagonisms. But that is not the same *as* abolishing classes.

In general, two different classes remain in socialist society, the workers and peasants. And this continuation of class differences is another consequence of the fact that socialism is “still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from which it emerges”.

The whole tendency of the development of capitalism is to expropriate all individual producers, depriving them of ownership of their means of production and converting them into wage workers—while at the same time, capital is more and more concentrated into the hands of a small number of very big concerns. The first act of the working class, when it gains power and starts on the road to socialism, is to expropriate the big capitalist concerns, converting their property into public property, into the property of the whole people.

In Britain the expropriation of individual producers has been carried through by capitalism in agriculture as well as in industry. Here, along with capitalist industry there exists capitalist agriculture. But in many other countries where capitalism has developed or into which it has penetrated, despite enormous differences in the development of capitalism in agriculture, agriculture has remained predominantly a peasant economy, in which the greater part of agricultural production is carried on not by wage labour but by small peasant proprietors.

Under such conditions, could it be proposed not only to expropriate the capitalists, turning their property into public property, and not only to expropriate the landlords, but also to expropriate the peasants?

Recognising the necessity of the working class forming an alliance with the mass of the working peasantry in the fight against capitalists and landlords, Engels answered this question long ago.

“When we are in possession of state power,” he wrote, “we shall not even think of forcibly expropriating the small peasants. . . . Our task relative to the small peasants consists ... in effecting a transition from his private enterprise and private possession to *co-operative* ones, not forcibly but by dint of example and the

proffer of social assistance for this purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, where the peasant class and peasant production exist, the task of building socialism involves, in the countryside: {a} expropriating the landlords, {b} eliminating capitalist farming and exploitation of wage labour (that is, the “liquidation of the kulaks”), and (c) not converting small peasant property into public property, but converting small-scale individual peasant production into large-scale cooperative production and individual peasant property into co-operative property.

Consequently there have arisen:

(a) Two forms of socialist property. “Socialist property . . . exists either in the form of state property (belonging to the whole people) or in the form of co-operative or collective farm property (property of collective farms, property of co-operative societies).”<sup>2</sup>

These are both *socialist* forms of property, because they are both forms through which associated producers hold their means of production in common and dispose of the product, work for themselves and not for exploiters, and receive according to their work.

Their essential difference is the difference between a state or public enterprise which belongs to the whole people, and a co-operative enterprise which belongs to a particular group of people.

(b) Corresponding to these two forms of property, two classes the workers, who work in public enterprises owned by the whole people; and the peasants, who are joint-owners of co-operative enterprises.

These are *mw* classes, classes of socialist society. The socialist working class is a new working class—not an exploited proletariat divorced from means of production and selling its labour-power to capitalists, but a working class which “far from being bereft of the instruments and means of production, on the contrary possesses these jointly with the whole people”.<sup>3</sup> And the

<sup>1</sup> Engels, *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution of the U.S.S.R.*, Article 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Stalin, On the Draft Constitution of the U.S.S.R., II.*

socialist peasantry is a new peasantry, emancipated from exploitation by landlords and middlemen, which “bases its work and wealth not on individual labour and on backward technical equipment, but on collective labour and up-to-date technical equipment” and whose economy is “based, not on private property, but on collective property”.<sup>1</sup>

Thus though the same individuals, or their children, who belonged to the old working class and peasantry belong to the new working class and peasantry, the latter are new classes, which have arisen from socialist production relations, and which take the place of the old classes which are done away with when the old production relations are done away with.

These are friendly, not antagonistic classes. Neither exploits the other, and they engage in an exchange of economic activities for the equal benefit of each class.

At the same time, the workers are the leading class; they play the decisive, leading role in building socialism. This is because the workers, by their class position, were the leading force in the fight against capitalism; and because they are associated with what is, as we shall see immediately, the *higher* form of socialist property, namely, public property.

While the existence of co-operative alongside public property, and consequently the existence of two classes, facilitates the development of socialist production, the transition to the higher stage of communism entails the emergence of a single form of property, namely, public property, and, consequently, the elimination of all class distinctions.

The principle of communism, “to each according to his needs”, presupposes, as Marx and Engels put it, that “all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation”,<sup>2</sup> which will plan production in all its branches in accordance with the needs of the people; and similarly that the whole social product is at the disposal of the same vast association”, so that it may be distributed according to need. But this entails that state production and co-operative production must have been combined into a single whole. Communist society is

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *loc. cit.*

classless society, in which all participate equally according to abilities in a single organisation of social production, and receive equally according to needs.

*Contradiction of Productive Forces and Production Relations in the Transition to Communism. The Ending of Commodity Production*

It follows that the transition from the first phase of communism to the higher phase entails a change in the relations of production, that is, in forms of property. For it involves a change from two forms of socialist property to a single form.

Such a change is necessary precisely because of the necessity of bringing production relations into conformity with productive forces. For as the productive forces of socialist society grow, their further growth is hampered by the division of two forms of socialist property, which eventually becomes an obstacle in the development of production.

The co-existence of group and public property, of cooperative or collective farm agriculture and publicly-owned industry, means in effect that two production sectors co-exist in socialist society. In the publicly-owned sector, production is directed and the product disposed of by a public authority, representing the whole of society. In the group sector, on the other hand, production is directed and the product disposed of by a group.

To begin with, socialism advances on this basis. The working class persuades the peasants to collectivise their undertakings and to develop socialist, collective farm agriculture. This is the necessary basis for the development of socialist production in countries where a large peasant class exists. And it is necessary to continue developing socialist production on this basis for a long time, until all the productive potentialities of group or co-operative production have been extended to the utmost.

But nevertheless a point is reached when the co-existence of two production sectors, public and co-operative production, begins to act as a hindrance to the further development of production. Why is this? There are two aspects of the problem.

(1) In the first place, the co-existence of two production sectors is bound up with the continued production of consumer goods as commodities, that is to say, their production for sale on

the market, to any purchaser. In socialism, labour-power ceases to be a commodity, and so do means of production—except where they are being produced for foreign trade; but consumer goods can and do continue to be produced as commodities, so long as conditions continue to exist which create a market for such commodities.

Such conditions are provided by the co-existence of group or co-operative enterprise in agriculture alongside public enterprise in industry. For since the products of the group enterprise belong to the group and are disposed of by the group, rather than belonging to the whole of society and being disposed of by the whole of society, it follows that the group cannot but seek to dispose of its products by selling them as commodities, and, in return, seek to buy other products as commodities.

At this stage, wrote Stalin, “in order to ensure an economic bond between town and country, between industry and agriculture, commodity production (exchange through purchase and sale) should be preserved for a certain period, it being the form of economic tie with the town which is alone acceptable to the peasants. At present the collective farms will not recognise any other economic relation with the town except the commodity relation—exchange through purchase and sale.”<sup>1</sup>

From this it follows that “consumer goods, which are needed to compensate the labour-power expended in the process of production” continue to be produced and sold as commodities.

This method of distributing consumer goods in socialist society can continue to operate so long as the principle governing distribution is the socialist principle of “to each according to his work”. But when production begins to approach the point where products can be distributed according to need, the form of distribution corresponding to the production of products as commodities no longer conforms to the requirements of production. It becomes a hindrance. Then what is required is not that people should be able to buy consumer goods on the market “to compensate the labour-power expended in the process of production”, but that all products should be at the disposal of society for distribution according to needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*

Hence commodity circulation is incompatible with the prospective transition from socialism to communism. . . . The transition from socialism to communism and the communist principle of distribution of products according to needs preclude all commodity exchange, and, hence, preclude the conversion of products into commodities.”<sup>1</sup>

At this stage, therefore, the system where group, co-operative enterprises co-exist ‘with public enterprises, dispose of their own products and sell them as commodities, must be replaced by a system where all products are disposed of by a single vast association of all the people.

(2) In the second place, the co-existence of group or cooperative enterprise in agriculture with publicly-owned enterprise in industry means that the whole of production still cannot be directed by a single social-economic centre which directly plans the whole of production. On the contrary, the planning of production must proceed by indirect methods of encouraging a particular volume and direction of co-operative, peasant production by offering suitable economic incentives to the peasants in the form of prices.

For this reason again, in proportion as production advances to the level of production of abundance, the system of two forms of socialist property and two production sectors, which at first helps to increase socialist production, at length becomes a hindrance.

“It would be unpardonable blindness,” wrote Stalin, “not to see that these factors are already beginning to hamper the powerful development of our productive forces, since they create obstacles to the full extension of government planning to the whole of the national economy, especially agriculture.”<sup>2</sup>

What is eventually required is that a single vast association of all the people should direct all branches of production as a single productive system with the aim of satisfying all needs.

For this reason, Stalin stressed that it would be wrong to think that with the institution of a socialist economic basis there is no longer any contradiction between productive forces and

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

production relations. On the contrary, there does exist such a contradiction, and it must be solved by further transformations of production relations, the conversion of all property into the property of the whole of society. This is communism. And this, he said, “will be a radical transition from one form of economy, the economy of socialism, to another, higher form of economy, the economy of communism.”<sup>1</sup> But this transition, unlike radical transitions of the past, is achieved gradually, without violence, and by social agreement. For antagonistic classes no longer exist, and so its achievement is equally in the interests of *all* members of society.

Hence whereas in socialist society, the first phase of communism, consumer goods can be and indeed must be still produced as commodities, in the higher phase of communism they must cease to be produced as commodities. Similarly, whereas in socialist society there can exist group or co-operative alongside public property; a collective farm sector of production alongside publicly-owned industry; and consequently two classes, workers and peasants; in communist society there exists only public property, a single all-embracing production association, and no classes.

Is the existence of two forms of property, of two classes, always necessary in the first stage of socialism? Must the transition from socialism to communism inevitably and always involve a change in property relations?

No, the existence of two forms of socialist property would not arise, and so a further radical change in property relations would not be necessary, in the case where “capitalism and the concentration of production have advanced far enough both in industry and agriculture to permit the expropriation of *all* the means of production in the country, and their conversion into public property,”<sup>2</sup>—in other words, in the case where, following the abolition of capitalist exploitation, there was no necessity to institute group as well as public socialist property.

Such could be the case in Britain. For this reason, Britain might be able to leap over this stage in the transition to commu-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

nism experienced by other countries.

*Conditions for the Transition from Socialism to Communism*

From all this, Stalin concluded that “in order to pave the way for a real . . . transition to communism, at least three main preliminary conditions have to be satisfied.”<sup>1</sup>

Briefly, what has to be done is (1) to raise production to the level where the needs of all can be fully satisfied, (2) concentrate the whole of production and the whole product in the hands of a vast association of the whole people, and (3) create the necessary conditions for making labour life’s prime want and eliminating all subordination of people to the division of labour.

It is the task of society in the stage of socialism to secure the gradual realisation of the conditions necessary for the advance to communism, when for the first time it will be possible to begin satisfying the needs of all and for all to develop to the full all their capacities.

(1) The first condition is the continuous expansion of all branches of social production, in order at last to produce not only plenty but abundance. This expansion requires, Stalin stressed, a relatively higher rate of expansion of the production of means of production”, in order to provide the necessary technical equipment.<sup>2</sup>

(2) The second condition is “by means of gradual transitions to replace commodity circulation by a system . . . under which the central government, or some other social-economic centre, might control the whole product of social production in the interests of society.”<sup>3</sup>

Where not only public but also collective farm (co-operative or group) property exists, this means “to raise collective farm property to the level of public property”. And Stalin proposed that the way to achieve this was gradually to introduce, step by step and “without any particular hurry”, a system whereby more and more and finally all the marketable products of agricultural production would be disposed of by a central authority, which

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



would at the same time be supplying the farmers with the manufactured goods they required. In this way, without confiscation or similar drastic measures, a position would at length be reached in which farmers and industrial workers were alike participating in a single organisation of social production.

(2)The third condition is “to ensure such a cultural advancement of society as will secure for all members of society the all-round development of their physical and mental abilities, so that the members of society may be in a position to receive an education sufficient to enable them to be active agents of social development, and in a position freely to choose their occupations and not be tied all their lives, owing to the existing division of labour, to some one occupation.”<sup>1</sup>

To ensure this:

(a) “It is necessary to shorten the working day at least to six, and subsequently to five hours. This is needed in order that the members of society might have the necessary free time to receive an all-round education.”<sup>2</sup>

Marx pointed out that it is always necessary for men to spend time producing to satisfy their wants. When exploitation of man by man is abolished, then, he wrote, “they accomplish this task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its fundamental premise.”<sup>3</sup>

Hence shortening the working day is a fundamental measure in socialist production, and a condition without which the all-round development of men’s physical and mental abilities cannot be achieved. This all-round development, Marx stresses, “is its own end”. It is not sought in order that production shall advance. On the contrary, the technical advance of production, including

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, ch. 28, section 1

the possibility of shortening the working day, is sought in order that this development shall be achieved. "Men produce, not for production's sake, but to satisfy their needs."<sup>1</sup> Then and only then will "work be transformed in the eyes of society from only a means of supporting life into life's prime want."<sup>2</sup>

(b) "It is necessary to introduce compulsory polytechnical education."<sup>3</sup>

This means that the basic education which all members of society receive will include as an essential component the acquisition of knowledge of the principles underlying the production techniques of society, so that all will "be able freely to choose their occupation and not be tied to one occupation all their lives"—and will, moreover, not be simply performing a task learned by rote, but be masters of the production process, which is a condition for truly creative labour, and for pleasure in labour.

(c) "It is necessary likewise that housing conditions should be radically improved, and that real wages of workers and employees should be at least doubled, if not more, both by means of direct increases of wages and salaries, and, more especially, by further systematic reductions of prices for consumer goods."<sup>4</sup>

This is necessary if all are to live and work, as Marx said, "under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it."

After all these conditions are satisfied, then:

"In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also 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 right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

to his ability, to each according to his needs.”<sup>1</sup>

To sum up.

The goal of socialist society is to achieve communism. This means that social production has been so expanded that abundance is produced to satisfy all the needs of all the members of society; that the subordination of the individual to the division of labour has been ended and every individual is free to develop fully all his physical and mental abilities; that work has ceased to be only a necessary means of supporting life and has become itself a primary need of life; that social property has become the basis of society; that all the means of life and enjoyment are provided by society to all human beings.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

## CHAPTER TEN

MOTIVE FORCES OF THE DEVELOPMENT FROM  
SOCIALISM TO COMMUNISM

The class struggle continues to operate in the building of socialism and in the transition to communism. First the workers and peasants wage a struggle to completely eliminate the defeated exploiting classes, and then to eliminate all the effects and hangovers of the past exploitation.

In this struggle the views and institutions of the socialist superstructure play an essential role. The socialist superstructure differs from the superstructure in previous society in that socialist views and institutions are developed (1) with the conscious purpose of building and consolidating the socialist basis, (2) with the ever wider participation of the people, (3) with the aid of criticism and self-criticism based on a common interest, and (4) with the aim of facilitating the transition to a higher order of society, communism.

A key role is played in the building of socialism and the transition to communism by the state, as the organ of power of the working people, and by the party, as their vanguard organisation.

*General Law of Development of Society*

Marx summed up the general law of development of society as follows:

“In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

“The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the

contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

“At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. . . .

“No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. . . .

“The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close.”<sup>1</sup>

In these propositions of Marx are formulated, in the most general terms and yet with strict scientific precision, the fundamental laws regulating the development of human society. These propositions are, therefore, the key to understanding the development of society up to the present day. They are also the key to understanding how society is to develop in the future, how social progress is to be continued.

In these propositions Marx showed how, from the breakup of primitive communism, production took “antagonistic forms” and developed through a series of revolutions, each of which became

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.

necessary when the developing forces of production came in conflict with the existing relations of production. The motive force of this entire development has been the class struggle, which, passing through a series of stages, culminates with the victory of the working class in the socialist revolution. By abolishing capitalist property and establishing social ownership of the means of production, this prepares the way for the transition to classless society, free from social antagonisms.

Thus Marx proved that division into classes, and class struggles, belong only to a particular historical period—the long period of travail which he called “the prehistory of human society”. This phase is brought to an end with the victory of socialism. Thenceforward and to an increasing degree the whole of social production passes under conscious social control.

But that does not mean that laws of social development cease to operate.

It remains true that in carrying on production people enter into definite relations of production which must correspond with the character of their productive forces.

It remains true that people’s consciousness is determined by their social being.

It remains true that as production develops so must new social tasks develop with it.

But instead of asserting their sway through class conflicts, through crises and catastrophes, and by the frustration of men’s intentions, the laws of social development are more and more consciously utilised by associated humanity, in the interests of society as a whole, to realise men’s intentions.

Associated on the basis of a common interest, men are in full control of their own social course. They direct it by the compass of their knowledge of their own needs and of the real conditions of their social existence.

In this and the next chapter we shall consider the laws of development in socialist and communist society. First we shall consider the motive forces, or chief agencies, active in effecting development; and second we shall consider the planned character of the development. We shall see that the building of socialism and the transition to communism is effected by the class struggle of workers and peasants. And we shall see that to an increasing de-

gree the whole of social production develops in accordance with an agreed social plan.

*Laws of the Class Struggle in the Transition from Capitalism to Communism*

In the transition from capitalism to communism, the class struggle eventually comes to an end. For first antagonistic classes, and then all classes, are finally abolished. But this end is achieved, not by gradually giving up class struggles, by gradually reconciling antagonistic classes and substituting class collaboration for class struggles, but by waging the class struggle to the end, that is, to such complete and final victory of the working classes over the exploiters that the latter are abolished as a class, leaving not a trace behind them.

As we have seen, the first step and the essential precondition to the victory of socialism is the conquest of power by the working class, which, at the head of the majority of the working people, overthrows the rule of the last exploiting class, the capitalist class.

After that, the task of the working class and its allies is gradually to eliminate capitalist and other forms of exploitation and place the whole of production on a socialist basis. Capitalism and even pre-capitalist forms of economy are sure to exist, even on a fairly large scale, after working-class power is won. For even after the nationalisation of the big capitalist enterprises, there will remain in nearly all countries a large field of small capitalist enterprise and of small-scale commodity production, which cannot be immediately and summarily nationalised.

There follows, therefore, a period of the struggle to establish socialism, in which three main economic tasks have to be fulfilled:

- (1) To expand socialist state industry.
- (2) To subject remaining capitalist enterprise to strict state control, first directing it into socially useful channels, and then gradually eliminating it and replacing it by state or co-operative enterprise.
- (3) To provide small producers with improved instruments of production, gradually persuading them to engage in forms of co-operative production so as to raise their productivity and standards of life.

When these tasks are completed, then the socialist economic structure is completed. The socialist ownership of all the principal means of production is established and all exploitation of man by man is abolished.

Such a process is, from the nature of the case, a process of uninterrupted class struggle, waged by the working class and its allies against the defeated capitalist class.

“The class struggle does not disappear under the dictatorship of the proletariat,” wrote Lenin, “it merely assumes different forms.”<sup>1</sup>

The process of establishing socialism is a process of bitter and, indeed, intensified class struggles. The dispossessed big capitalists fight with every means in their power to regain their lost positions. They make use of every economic difficulty and division of interests. In particular, they rely on the continued existence of a numerous class of exploiters in the sector of small-scale capitalism and on the inevitable waverings and uncertainty of small producers. And the stronger socialism grows, the more is their resistance intensified.

“There have been no cases in history where dying classes have voluntarily departed from the scene,” wrote Stalin.

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“There have been no cases in history where dying classes have voluntarily departed from the scene,” wrote Stalin.” “This is the social basis for the intensification of the class struggle. . . . The dying classes resist, not because they have become stronger than we, but because socialism is growing faster than they, and they are becoming weaker than we are. And precisely because

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.



they are becoming weaker, they feel that their last days are approaching and are compelled to resist with all the forces and all the means in their power.”<sup>1</sup>

Only with the final victory of socialism are all class antagonisms and class battles ended within the given country. Even then, so long as socialism is victorious in some countries only (as is the case at the present time), the capitalist forces operating from outside continue to use whatever means they can to combat the building of socialism. But these forces have then lost the support of any class within the socialist country, though they may still count on the support of some individuals.

However, the ending of the exploiting classes and so of the struggle against them, does not yet mean the ending of all remaining effects of the system of exploitation. When something is abolished, some of its effects remain, since effects outlive causes. Hence the struggle to do away with these surviving effects must continue.

In the main, these survivals consist of: (a) the continued subordination of people to the division of labour, with all its aspects and consequences, which we discussed in the last chapter; and (b) ideological hangovers, that is, the continued existence in men's minds of capitalist views and attitudes.

There are three main ways in which the struggle to eliminate them is carried on: (a) economically, by pressing forward the work of socialist construction; (b) politically, by carrying through the ever broader democratisation of all government and administrative work from top to bottom; (c) ideologically, by carrying through the socialist education of the whole of society.

What sort of struggle is this? Is it still a class struggle?

Yes, it is a class struggle, in as much as it is conducted by definite classes, namely, the working class and the peasants, led by the working class. But it is not a struggle *between* classes, since it is not directed against any other class. The exploiting classes being already completely eliminated, it is directed at eliminating the remaining effects of the past exploitation. It is a struggle of the working class and peasants, led by the working class, to raise the whole of society to the level of communism. Its method

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *The Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U.*

is not the method of force but the method of example and persuasion, of criticism and self-criticism. The method of force is only retained in so far as it may be necessary, when a socialist country is still surrounded by hostile capitalist countries, to combat the hostile activities of certain individuals.

In classless, communist society men will be in full conscious control of their entire social course. They will be fully the masters of their own social organisation. But in the entire phase of transition from capitalism to communism, this can be only partially the case: it is becoming so, but it is not yet entirely so. For while the struggle against the exploiting classes continues, and while the struggle to eliminate the hangovers of past exploitation continues, it cannot be said that people are yet fully the masters of their own social organisation. On the contrary, they are still only partially the masters of it. For the development of socialist society still takes place by means of class struggle. And so long as people are engaged in class struggle, they are not yet fully the masters of their own social organisation.

*The Role of the Superstructure in the Development of Socialist Society*

According to Marxism, it is “the mode of production of material life” which always “conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general”, so that on the basis of the given economic structure of society there arises a corresponding superstructure of views and institutions. The superstructure, which is thus always a product of the basis, exists in order to serve the basis, to help it shape and consolidate itself and to do away with the remnants of former production relations.

This remains true in the period of transition from capitalism to communism, in socialist society.

In general, socialism cannot be brought into existence without the development of socialist views, which arouse and mobilise the masses to struggle against capitalism and show the road to victory, and without corresponding mass organisations; and when the working class and its allies win power, then they transform the institutions of society into institutions which correspond to the needs of building socialism, and socialist views become the ruling, dominant views of society. Thus the struggle against capitalism for

socialism has the result that, as Marx said, when the old basis is at length overthrown, the entire superstructure is rapidly transformed. A superstructure of socialist views and institutions comes into operation. And the function of these views and institutions is precisely to serve the building and consolidation of socialist economy and the elimination of the remnants of capitalism.

Marxism always stresses the positive, active role of the superstructure in social development. In the building of socialism, socialist institutions and views play a most active role, in directing, organising and mobilising the people for the accomplishment of the social tasks.

Capitalist institutions and views exist to maintain and strengthen the capitalist property relations; they serve to maintain exploitation, to coerce the majority and deceive them. Socialist institutions and views exist to eliminate exploitation, to coerce the minority (when all exploitation is abolished, however, the need for coercion begins to disappear), and to enlighten people.

Consequently, the socialist superstructure has special, new characteristics, which make it a new kind of superstructure, contrasting with the superstructure in societies based on class exploitation.

In such societies, the superstructure served the exploitation of the majority of society by a ruling exploiting class. In socialist society, on the other hand, the superstructure serves the struggle to abolish exploitation and to consolidate and carry forward an economy without exploitation, based on social ownership of the means of production and aiming at the maximum satisfaction of the material and cultural needs of the whole of society. This is what constitutes the essence of the socialist superstructure, and defines its role in the development of socialist society.

What are the outstanding new characteristics of the socialist superstructure?

(1) *Socialist Views and Institutions are Developed with the Conscious Purpose of Helping People to Satisfy their Requirements*

When the working people win power from the exploiters, they proceed to create the basis of socialist society. They do this deliberately, with full consciousness of what they are aiming at, namely, to replace capitalist economy by socialist economy.

In this respect the whole process of the creation and consolidation of the socialist basis is quite unlike that of the creation of any previous basis—quite unlike, for example, the process of the birth and consolidation of capitalism.

How did capitalism as an economic system come to exist? Not by the capitalist class conquering power and then with deliberation and forethought creating a capitalist economy. On the contrary, capitalist production and with it the capitalist class began spontaneously to develop within feudal society, after a certain period, the capitalist class, growing strong and feeling itself thwarted by feudal rule, led a revolt against the feudal rulers and itself took over the direction of society. And then, of course, the economic forces of capitalist development went ahead much faster, unchecked by feudal fetters.

At no point did any leader of the capitalist class say: “We shall now proceed to construct capitalism.” Oliver Cromwell never said anything of the sort in 1649, nor did William of Orange in 1688, nor Lord Grey in 1832. But in November, 1917, Lenin did say: “We shall now proceed to construct socialism.”

So contrasting two revolutions, Stalin wrote:

“The main task of the bourgeois revolution consists in seizing power and making it conform to the already existing bourgeois economy, whereas the main task of the proletarian revolution consists in seizing power in order to build up a new socialist economy.”<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, the socialist basis, unlike the capitalist basis, is deliberately created with full consciousness of what is aimed at.

And this difference implies great differences between the character and development of socialist and capitalist ideas. Capitalist ideas were developed by a spontaneous process, without any conscious object of finding the ways and means of establishing and building capitalism. Socialist ideas, on the other hand, are developed in the course of the working-class struggle against capitalism by a process of arriving at scientific conclusions about the structure of society and its laws of development, precisely in order that such conclusions may serve the struggle to get rid of capitalism and establish and build socialism.

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *On the Problems of Leninism*, ch. 4.

These scientific socialist ideas then become the guiding, ruling ideas of the socialist superstructure. And the state and other institutions of socialist society are then developed in correspondence with these ideas—with consciousness of the actual needs of development of socialist society. Thus the political views, the philosophical views, the legal views, the literary and artistic views—everything in the socialist superstructure is developed with the conscious purpose of serving the development of socialism, and is tested by whether it does or does not fulfil that purpose.

Naturally, the old capitalist views still continue in existence. A long struggle takes place between the nascent elements of the new socialist superstructure and the dying elements of the old capitalist superstructure. The conscious object of this struggle is to ensure that the superstructure does serve the consolidation of the new basis and the elimination of the old basis.

*(2) Socialist Views and Institutions are Developed with ever wider Participation of the Working People*

In society based on the exploitation of man by man, the ruling views serve, in one way or another, to justify this exploitation and to make people accept it. And similarly the institutions of society serve to maintain the dominance of the exploiting minority over the exploited majority. Hence, in the main, the views are the biased and deceptive views of the minority which are *imposed* on the majority, and the institutions are institutions of fraud and coercion.

It is quite otherwise in socialist society. There the ruling views serve to liberate the people from exploitation, to show them how to combine in free association to secure the maximum satisfaction of all their material and cultural requirements. And the institutions of society serve the same purpose.

Hence the views and institutions of socialist society are not imposed on the people but, on the contrary, are of the people and correspond to their deepest aspirations and interests.

Hence instead of the institutions of society being run by a privileged few (as they are in capitalist society, even when everyone has a vote), the aim is to draw wider and wider masses of people into the running of all social institutions, so that these institutions will be in truth the people's own institutions. And instead of the views of society being elaborated by an intellectual

elite (who seek to put them over to the masses, who are expected to listen respectfully, as in our “popular” discussions run by the B.B.C.), the aim is to create wider and wider popular debate and discussion about all views, so that these views will be in truth the people’s own views.

Naturally, the views and institutions of socialist society become enormously enriched as a result of the ever wider participation of the people in shaping them.

(3) *Socialist Views and Institutions are Developed with the Aid of Criticism and Self-Criticism*

In capitalist and other societies based on exploitation of man by man, the views and institutions of society are not tested in their development by whether they advance mankind’s understanding of the real conditions of life and enable people to realise their common interest, their material and cultural requirements, but by whether they serve the interests of the ruling class. And so their development is effected, in the last analysis, by the clash and conflict of the opposing interests in society, and by the conflict of different tendencies arising from the contradictions in which the ruling class itself is constantly involved. And the more the old basis becomes a fetter on social development, the more oppressive do the social institutions become and the more obscurantist and deceptive the views.

The socialist basis, on the other hand, is a basis on which people co-operate together to satisfy their constantly rising material and cultural requirements. Living in such a society, people have nothing to gain from views which in any way disguise, distort or falsify things. On the contrary, the truer, the clearer and the more profound their understanding of nature and society, the better will their views serve their social purpose. And similarly, the object of the development of the institutions of socialist society is to develop such institutions as will best enable people to co-operate together to secure the maximum satisfaction of all their material and cultural requirements.

Consequently the views and institutions of socialist society are tested in their development precisely by whether they advance mankind’s understanding of the real conditions of life and enable people to realise their common interest, their material and cultural requirements.

Naturally enough, not all the views that are in fact put forward are in all respects correct views. Nor are all the institutions that are in fact set up in all respects good institutions. And furthermore, as socialism develops, the need must arise' for the further development of the views and institutions of society to correspond to and serve the further needs of social development.

How, then, is the necessary development of the superstructure effected in socialist society? Not, as in societies based on exploitation, by conflicts based on contradictory, opposing interests, but by criticism and self-criticism based on a community of interests.

In general, it is only by practising criticism and self-criticism that people can get the best results from any co-operative undertaking, because from this alone can come the ability to do the job ever better and better. And so it is only by practising criticism and self-criticism that a superstructure of views and institutions can be developed adequate to and worthy of a socialist society.

The leading principle in the development of the views and also of the institutions of socialist society is, therefore, the principle of criticism and self-criticism.

#### *(4) Socialist Views and Institutions Facilitate the Transition to Communism*

The function of the superstructure in all previous society has been to conserve the existing social system. Therefore when the development of production comes in conflict with the existing relations of production, the superstructure becomes increasingly reactionary, resisting the necessary social change.

The development of socialist production, as we have seen, comes to necessitate a whole series of profound social transformations, resulting eventually in the birth of the higher stage of communism. Thus the whole process of production and distribution must pass under the management of a single vast association of the whole nation", all subordination of the individual to the division of labour must cease, all commodity production must cease, and the right to receive according to the work contributed to society must be replaced by the right of every individual to receive all he needs.

There can be no doubt that the superstructure of socialist society, as it first emerges from capitalist society, does not corre-

spond to these higher requirements of communism. For example, the views and likewise the institutions of socialism are such as to uphold the right to receive strictly according to work done, which contradicts the right to receive according to need.

What happens, then, when the material conditions for the transition to communism begin to mature? Do the views and institutions of society then begin to play a reactionary role, and begin to hinder instead of helping forward the further progress of social life?

No, because the socialist superstructure is created with the conscious purpose of helping people to satisfy their social requirements, is shaped by the whole people, and is controlled in its development by the practice of criticism and self-criticism. So when experience shows the need for changes, the character of these changes can be discussed and decided upon, and such views and institutions as no longer serve a good purpose can be altered.

Hence when certain views and institutions no longer conform to the changing needs of social development, they can be changed in good time, without conflict, through the process of criticism and self-criticism. And, moreover, the fundamental views of socialist society are views which foresee the transition to communism.

In short, serving to shape and consolidate the socialist basis and to eliminate the relics of the capitalist basis, the role of the superstructure in socialist society is also to facilitate the transition from socialism to communism.

*The State and the Party as the Most Powerful Instruments for Building Socialism and Effecting the Transition to Communism*

A role of key importance in the socialist superstructure, and so in the whole direction and organisation of life in socialist society, is played by the state and by the party. These are, indeed, the most powerful instruments for building socialism and effecting the transition to communism. It could not be done without them—though both state and party, when they have served their purpose, will finally vanish from the scene.

We have seen that the development of socialist society is still a development motivated by class struggle. This is why the role of the socialist state and of the party is of such great and all-embracing significance. The victory of the working class and its



allies requires a state to enforce and carry out their aims, and a party to lead and guide the Struggle.

What, amid all the variations in form possible in a socialist State, are the principal characteristics of the socialist state?

(1) The socialist state is the organ of power of the working class with its allies.

This power is exerted: (a) to eliminate the resistance of the exploiters, (b) to direct the construction of socialism, (c) to protect socialist property and the personal property of citizens from infringement either by individuals or groups inside the country or from hostile foreign forces.

(2) The socialist state is the organ of the whole working people, and not of an oppressing minority. Hence it is a state of a completely new type, not the instrument of a ruling group but the instrument of rule of the working masses.

The socialist state is set up by the people. In doing so, they destroy the former “bureaucratic-military machine”,<sup>1</sup> by the aid of which the rule of the capitalists and landlords was exercised, and “win the battle for democracy”.<sup>2</sup>

“Our aim,” wrote Lenin in 1917, “is to draw the whole of the poor into the practical work of administration ... to ensure that every toiler . . . shall perform state duties. . . . The more resolutely we stand for a ruthlessly firm government ... the more varied must be the forms and methods of control from below ... in order to weed out bureaucracy.”<sup>3</sup>

“For the administration of the state in this spirit,” he declared, “we can immediately set up a state apparatus of about ten million, if not twenty million people—an apparatus unknown in any capitalist country.”<sup>4</sup>

Hence characteristic of the socialist state is the ever increasing participation of the whole working people, not merely in the election of the state bodies, but in the work of the state; and the ever closer links between the state and the mass organisations of

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ch. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lenin, *Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*.

<sup>4</sup> Lenin, *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*

the working people, such as the trade unions.

(3) The socialist state is the instrument by means of which the working people undertake the management of social production in the interests of the whole of society. Public enterprises are state enterprises. The state, as the representative of the whole people, is their owner and manager.

The socialist state has the function of owning and managing the whole sector of publicly-owned socialist production. Thus it has the function of directly controlling and guiding this whole sector of economy. But thereby it also exerts an ever increasing influence over economic development in its entirety, since all sectors of economy are dependent on the state sector and are influenced by it.

Thus the socialist state, either directly or indirectly, fulfils the function of directing the whole development of socialist economy. Thereby it is a tremendously powerful instrument for consolidating and shaping the socialist basis and developing socialist society in the direction of communism.

The state is essentially an organ of power. Such an organ of power is required to direct socialist development so long as there remain oppositional forces whose resistance and hostility have to be overcome.

In dealing with the question of the socialist state, Marx and Engels showed that after the resistance of the dispossessed classes was eliminated and the whole of economy placed on a fully socialist basis, there would be less and less need for an organ of public power to enforce the general interests of society. The functions of the state as an organ of public power would gradually atrophy, as the exercise of those functions became unnecessary. Consequently the state apparatus, as a special organ of power, possessed of the force to enforce its decisions, would eventually and gradually wither away and what would be left would be simply the organisation for carrying on the economic and cultural life of society.

“The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another,” wrote Engels, “and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes

of production. The state is not abolished, it withers away. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

“The society that will organise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong; into the museum of antiquities by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.”<sup>2</sup>

However, in the conditions in which socialism has actually developed, there has arisen the situation that even when antagonistic classes have been eliminated in a socialist country—the Soviet Union—encirclement by hostile capitalist powers remains. Hence the need for an organ of public power in socialist society, for a socialist state, remains and will remain so long as capitalist encirclement remains, even if meantime the advance is effected right to the higher phase of communism. The socialist state is still required to guard the achievements of socialism.

Under such circumstances, however, it more and more ceases to have any coercive function to perform inside the socialist country. There is no longer need for it to repress the resistance of the exploiters, but it does continue to direct the construction of socialism and to protect socialist property from its enemies. What happens is that more and more all the members of society rally around the socialist state, which they regard as the guardian of their achievements and liberties, and of their future well-being. Consequently there occurs not the withering away of the state, but the development of a new type of truly popular state of incomparable strength.

So the state will remain in being, wrote Stalin, “unless the capitalist encirclement is liquidated, and unless the danger of foreign military attack has disappeared.... It will not remain and will atrophy if the capitalist encirclement is liquidated and a socialist encirclement takes its place.”<sup>3</sup>

So right throughout the whole period of the rise of socialism and the transition to communism, until capitalism has been eliminated by the peoples all over the world, the socialist state plays a key role in protecting the gains of the working people and enforc-

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., ch. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Stalin, *Report to 18th Congress of the C.P.S.U.*

ing and carrying out their aims. But when the exploiting classes and their influence have finally been abolished everywhere, the socialist state will eventually “wither away”, and the “government of persons” will be replaced by “the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production”. Then there will exist economic organs and cultural organs of society, but not state organs.

Besides the state, as the public power of socialist society to enforce and direct the carrying out of the will of the people, there is also necessary the party. For in order to lead not only in economic construction but also in shaping the views and institutions of society, a leading force is necessary.

The socialist state comes into being as a consequence of the conquest of power by the working people, led by the working class. The working-class party, without whose leadership the working class cannot win power, is then the leading force which guides the state and the people in building socialism. The development and activity of the state in strict accordance with the interests and requirements of the people is ensured by the collective leadership and guidance of the party in all spheres of state activity.

The party is necessary so long as the struggle continues to eliminate the exploiting classes and then to eliminate all the consequences of exploitation. For such a struggle is impossible without a leadership, and this leadership consists precisely of the most advanced sections of the working class and its allies.

So long as the class struggle in any form continues, so long will there be a distinction between the class vanguard and the masses. A necessary feature of the existence of classes is the conditioning of the material and mental activities of these classes by the place they occupy in social production. From this there invariably arises a conscious minority of the class, who become actively conscious of the long-term class interests and aims and lead the whole class. The majority of the class, on the other hand, carry on their lives in accordance with existing conditions and become conscious of long-term social aims and enter into struggle for them only under the leadership of the minority. This is bound to be the case until class distinctions disappear and with them the conditioning of people by the place they occupy in social production, and until all individuals are living and develop-

ing all their capacities as members of society with equal status and opportunities.

So “the most active and politically conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other sections of the working people unite in the Communist Party . . . which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system, and is the leading core of all organisations of the working people, both public and state.”<sup>1</sup>

The party is not an organisation which “dictates”. It is not an organ of power. As the Webbs put it, the party exists in socialist society to fulfil “the vocation of leadership”.<sup>2</sup> For without the exercise of such a vocation by the most advanced section of the working people, it is impossible to rally millions to carry through economic construction, to develop and improve the views and institutions of society, so as to build socialism, effect the transition to communism and eventually raise the whole of society to the level of communism.

“The authority of the party is maintained by the confidence of the working class,” wrote Stalin. “The confidence of the working class is not to be won by force, for the use of force would kill confidence. It can only be won if the party theory is sound, if party policy is correct, if the party is devoted to the cause of the working class, and if the party is ready and able to convince the masses that its slogans are the right ones. . . . Thus the method of persuasion must be the chief method employed by the party in its leadership of the class.”<sup>3</sup>

When the party’s task is fulfilled, when the whole of society is raised to the level of communism, and when every threat from hostile forces and influences has disappeared, then it may be expected that the party will cease to exist. For it will then no longer be needed. For then social life will proceed without class struggle, nor will there be any distinction between the relatively advanced class vanguard and the masses. So there will no longer be any need for a vanguard organisation to blaze the trail of social progress.

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitution of the U.S.S.R.*, Article 126.

<sup>2</sup> S. and B. Webb, *Soviet Communism*, ch. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Stalin, *On the Problems of Leninism*, ch. 5.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### PLANNED PRODUCTION

On the basis of socialism, overall planning of production arises. The basic law of socialism operates by means of socialist planning of production.

But in socialism, men's control over the utilisation of means of production is still partial, in so far as they are still subordinate to division of labour; and social planning is still indirect, in so far as the continuation of commodity production entails such indirect methods of control as fixing payments for work, prices, etc.

In communism, conscious social control over utilisation of means of production and disposal of the social product is at length complete. Planning proceeds by taking into account the needs of society, the properties of the means and forces of production and the time required by the various operations. Thereby men are able to carry forward without limit the development of their mastery over nature. Man is fully the master of his own social organisation and increasingly the lord of nature.

Socialism and communism first develop on a national basis, but this will lead to world communism. The future of humanity will be determined by men's own decisions, based on their consciousness of the developing requirements of human life.

#### *Social Ownership as the Basis for Socialist Planning*

It is characteristic of socialist relations of production that, for the first time, they allow of production as a whole being planned. Because the means of production are socially owned, it follows that their utilisation is a matter of social decision. Production is planned to serve the interests of the whole of society.

With private ownership, production *cannot* be planned.

Production is planned within the workshop, but not in society generally.

There is often talk of planning under capitalism, but the fact that the aim of capitalist production is profit makes planning impossible. Particular capitalist concerns or groupings plan their

production, but then in the drive for profit come into conflict with rival capitalists and rival groupings. The capitalists expand production in the quest for profits; but their profits depend on their continually finding markets, and the contradiction between social production and private capitalist appropriation prevents the formation of a continuously expanding market. Production leads to rivalry for markets and spheres of investment, to crises, to the breakdown of any plans entertained by the capitalists and their apologists.

As Stalin observed: "If capitalism could adapt production, not to obtaining the utmost profit, but to the systematic improvement of the material conditions of the masses of the people, and if it could turn profits ... to the systematic improvement of the material conditions of the workers and peasants, there would be no crises. But then capitalism would not be capitalism."<sup>1</sup>

It is only when society has taken over the whole direction of production on the basis of social ownership, and adapts production to the systematic improvement of the conditions of the masses of the people, that planning comes into operation over production as a whole.

And then production not only *can* but *must* be planned, if it is to go on successfully. Planning is an economic necessity of socialist production, a consequence of the economic laws.

Socialist production, like all production, is regulated by its own economic laws. These laws are not created by planning, but are prior to and independent of such conscious activity and are its precondition. Socialist planning proceeds on the basis of the objective laws of socialist production, so as to draw up a plan which accords with them and can be realised by utilising them. But what would happen without such a plan?

Everything would fall into confusion, and the same economic laws which are utilised in socialist planning to expand production would operate to cause a breakdown of production. In other words, production could not be carried on without a plan. Such are the laws of socialist production, which thus necessitate the planning of production, once social ownership is established.

Planning on the basis of social ownership means that increas-

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Report to 16th Congress of the C.P.S.U.*

ingly the whole development of society is brought under conscious control. For the whole development of society is conditioned by the development of production.

Hence once socialism and the planned direction of social production is established, it is no longer true, as Engels said of all previous social development, that "what is willed happens but rarely . . . the ends of actions are intended, but the results which actually follow are not intended." To an increasing degree the course of social development is directed by men's rational consciousness of the requirements of social development.

This directing social consciousness, which operates through socialist planning, has its material basis in the establishment of social ownership of the principal means of production. As always, men's social being determines their consciousness. There develops a consciousness of a common social interest, which is precisely the reflection of an existing social interest; there develops a consciousness of the state of social production and of its inherent laws, which is precisely the reflection of the existing state of production and its laws; and so there arises as the characteristic feature of socialist economy the planned direction of the economy and of social development generally for the realisation of the common social interest.

### *The Basic Law of Socialism*

The aim of socialist production is "the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society", and the means to achieving this aim is "the continual expansion of socialist production on the basis of ever higher techniques." This is, as Stalin expressed it, "the basic law of socialism".<sup>1</sup>

It is the "basic" law, because it is the single all-embracing law which regulates the *whole* process of socialist production. "A basic economic law defines the nature of a given mode of production and all the principal aspects and principal processes of its development; it furnishes the key to the understanding and explanation of all the laws of the given economic system."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*

<sup>2</sup> G. Malenkov, *Report to 19th Congress of the C.P.S.U.*



The basic law of an economic system always expresses the aim to which production is subordinated within that system. For in general, production is always regulated in accordance with some aim or social purpose which it serves, and what aim it serves varies with the character of the production relations.

Where exploitation exists, production is subordinate to the aim of securing the surplus to be appropriated by the exploiters. To satisfy the human needs of the majority of society is not the aim. Their needs do not come into the picture, except in so far as they can succeed in enforcing them by independent action. They must be kept alive in order to be exploited: that is all. But in socialist society, where the means of production are socially owned, where the working people themselves direct production and there is no exploitation, the aim of production can be nothing else than to satisfy human needs. Why else should men co-operate in labour except to produce the means to satisfy their own requirements? The whole aim of socialism is to provide for all the means of living a full and happy life.

Thus Marx wrote: "The aim of capitalist production is to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus value, and consequently to exploit labour-power to the greatest possible extent."<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to this, Stalin wrote that "the aim of socialist production is not profit, but man and his needs."<sup>2</sup>

Capitalist ownership means that production is carried on for capitalist profit. Socialist ownership means that production is carried on for the satisfaction of the material and cultural requirements of the whole of society. In the case of capitalism then, as in previous systems of exploitation, the aim corresponds to the interests only of a tiny, ruling minority of society. In the case of socialism, on the other hand, the aim corresponds to the interests of the whole of society.

It follows that in capitalism the basic law cannot operate through any social agreement on the basic aim. On the contrary, it operates through a series of social conflicts and through the ruling capitalists blindly embarking on those measures which seem most profitable to themselves. In the process they exploit,

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, ch. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

impoverish and ruin masses of people, and involve society in all manner of unforeseen catastrophes.

In socialism, on the other hand, the basic law does operate precisely through conscious social agreement on the basic aim and through planning to carry through the means to achieve the aim. For because the aim corresponds to the interests of the whole of society, it follows that it can be and is consciously adopted by common consent. And because the means of production are socially owned, it follows that society can and does collectively decide upon and plan the carrying through of the means to achieve the aim.

The aim which society, by virtue of the production relations, sets social production now becomes the conscious aim of the associated members of society, and society consciously and in a planned way adopts the best means to achieve the aim.

This does not mean, it should be added, that the basic law operates at all times while the social system lasts with equal effect, and cannot meet with obstacles. In any society obstacles can arise which frustrate the operation of the basic law. For example, even while capitalism still survives, the operation of its basic law can be hindered by popular resistance, especially if anti-capitalist forces succeed in gaining any measure of influence in the state. Such hindrances, of course, weaken the system and can eventually result in its destruction. The same is true of socialism. For example, military attack on a socialist country must divert socialist production to the aim of defence, and the threat of military attack has continuously to some extent such a diversionary effect. Again, if through stupidity or malice serious mistakes are made in the planning of production, that too can frustrate the operation of the basic law of socialism. It is obvious, therefore, that two principal matters of concern in the policy of a socialist state are, in foreign affairs, to preserve peace and, at home, to ensure correct planning of the work of socialist construction.

Every law has its own characteristic mode of operation.

The basic law of capitalism, resting on the exploitation of the majority of society by a minority, operates without common consent, and without social planning and control of production, by the blind enforcement of the interest of a minority against the interest of the majority.

The basic law of socialism, resting on social ownership without exploitation of man by man, operates through common consent, by means of the social planning and control of production, by the conscious striving to realise the interests of the whole society.

*Limitations of Socialist Planning and How they are Overcome in the Transition to Communism*

In socialist society, as the first or lower phase of communism, there are still serious limitations to the full planning of production—or in other words, to the complete conscious social control of economic development in its entirety.

Complete conscious social control of economic development in its entirety means that men in association have absolute control over the utilisation of their means of production and the disposal of their social product.

Hitherto, so far from this having been the case, men have been in their economic activities (1) controlled by their own means of production, and (2) controlled by their own products.

This subordination of men to their means of production and to the product has operated ever since the first division of labour began in primitive communism. For the individual has been, as we have already noted, increasingly subordinated to the social division of labour. People have been controlled by their means of production, which have become their masters instead of the people being the masters. And when, as a result of the division of labour, people have begun to produce and exchange their products as commodities, then they have lost control over these products. Through the operation of the laws of commodity production, the products have asserted their dominance over people instead of people being able to dispose of their products as the masters of their own products.

The very essence of men's lack of control over the development of society, of their lack of mastery over their own social organisation, lies in this circumstance—that the utilisation of the means of production which men have themselves developed, and the exchange of the products which men have themselves produced, bring about consequences which determine their fate independent of their own decision.

Thus the very utilisation of the means of production brings it about, for example, that one man is a herdsman, another a general labourer, a third a craftsman, and a fourth a merchant. And the exchange of products brings it about that all the wealth of society is concentrated in the hands of one group while the rest receive a bare subsistence. Thus what happens to people, their fate, is determined *for* them, by the very means of production and products of their own labour.

This state of affairs was, in his early writings, called by Marx, in Hegelian-legal terminology, human “alienation”, or “self-alienation” or “alienation of labour”. Men “alienate themselves”, or “alienate their own labour”, because their own labour and their own products get out of their control and control them, as if they were being controlled by some independent and higher power.<sup>1</sup>

And so long as this is the case, men’s consciousness of their own social existence is necessarily a false consciousness. Not having their own social existence under conscious control, they cannot but develop a false consciousness, in which both their own motives and the objective conditions of their existence, as well as the objective forces which govern their motives and conditions of existence, are represented to themselves in fantastic forms. The most typical product of such false consciousness resulting from “human alienation” is the concept of the supernatural and the development of religious consciousness.

The decisive step in doing away with this state of affairs is taken with the establishment of socialism, that is, of the social ownership of the principal means of production. But as we have seen, the establishment of social ownership does not immediately do away with the consequences of the whole previous course of social development. Socialist society is “still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from which it emerges.” And in particular, there still remain (1) the subordination of men to the social division of labour, and (2) the production and exchange of

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<sup>1</sup> See Marx, *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*. Later, and in particular in *Capital*, in which this whole process is most exhaustively investigated, Marx gave up this terminology—doubtless because it was obscure and clumsy.

products (namely, consumer goods) as commodities.

This cannot but render social control and planning (*a*) partial, and (*b*) in some respects indirect.

(*a*) The control over their own social organisation by men in association remains partial, because men are still subordinate as individuals to the division of labour. They are not completely masters over the utilisation of their means of production because, to this extent, their utilisation of the means of production still limits their own free activity and self-development.

(*b*) And their planning of their own economic life remains in some respects indirect, because it still has to be effected, to some extent, through the method of influencing market arrangements.

It is no longer true in socialist society that society does not know and control what becomes of its products. All the same, society does not *directly* control and dispose of *all* its products. On the contrary, since consumer goods are still sold as commodities, what becomes of them is controlled only indirectly, by methods of fixing payments for work, prices, and so on.

For example, machine tools produced for socialist enterprises in the country concerned are *not* produced as commodities. These articles are not placed on the market as commodities, but simply transferred from one branch of production to another in accordance with a fully worked out plan.

Consumer goods, on the other hand, still *are* produced as commodities. They are not produced to satisfy an exactly calculated need, but are placed on the market as goods for sale. The way of securing the provision of consumer goods to those who need them is not by direct calculation of needs and provision of goods accordingly, but by adjusting payments for work and prices of goods in such a manner that the consumers are able to purchase the goods. The increasing satisfaction of needs in socialist society is thus effected mainly by systematic reductions of prices of consumer goods.

It is as a consequence of the furthest development of socialist planned production that these limitations are able to be overcome. Through the development of ever higher techniques of production, people are able to gain that leisure and culture which enables them to shake off every form of subordination to the social division of labour. And through the production of absolute abun-

dance, they are able at length to change their social organisation from one which gives to each according to his work and in which products are still distributed as commodities, to one which gives to each according to his need and in which products are no longer distributed as commodities.

In communist society, then, the conscious social control by associated people over the utilisation of their means of production and the disposal of their social product is at length made absolute, unqualified, unlimited. Each individual is free from the straitjacket hitherto placed on his all-round development by the social division of labour, and is free from the restriction to his satisfying all his needs hitherto imposed by the necessity of paying for the means of satisfaction. In communist society people in association, acting through the economic planning organs of society, can plan production in a complete and direct way—by simply reckoning up their productive forces and their needs, and then disposing of the productive forces in such a way as to produce the needs. This requires, of course, the thorough working out of the political economy of socialism as an exact science, and the creation of a very elaborate organisation for economic planning; but in principle what that organisation has to do is extremely simple.

Society, Engels wrote, “will have to arrange its plan of production in accordance with its means of production, which include, in particular, its labour forces. The useful effect of the various articles of consumption, compared with each other and with the quantity of labour required for their production, will in the last analysis determine the plan. People will be able to manage everything very simply. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

“It will be a society,” wrote Stalin, “in which production will be regulated by the requirements of society, and computation of the requirements of society will acquire paramount importance for the planning bodies.”<sup>2</sup>

Or as William Morris put it:

“The wares which we make are made because they are needed; men make for their neighbours’ use as if they were making for themselves, not for a vague market of which they know

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Part III, ch. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *loc. cit.*

nothing, and over which they have no control. We have now found out the things we want, and we have time and resources enough to consider our pleasure in making them.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Man's Mastery over Nature*

The economic development of communist society, proceeding on the basis of man's complete mastery over his own social organisation, is also a gigantic development of man's mastery over nature.

The opposition of man and nature which, as we have seen, is born as soon as human society is born, has always contained an element of antagonism and struggle, in the sense that uncontrolled natural forces threaten human existence and frustrate the realisation of human purposes. Thus in primitive society natural forces assume the proportions of menacing enemies, which have to be fought, cajoled or tricked. Earthquakes, floods, storms, droughts, etc., periodically destroy what man has made. In so far as natural forces are not understood and are not controlled, they are antagonistic to man and, even when their action is beneficent, they always contain the element of threat and danger.

In the course of the development of production, men have increasingly mastered natural forces. Increasing mastery of man over nature is, indeed, the essential content of material progress. In mastering natural forces men learn their laws of operation and so make use of these laws for human purposes. Man does not master natural forces by somehow weakening or destroying them, by imposing his will on them by somehow changing their properties and laws to suit his own desires, but by learning to know them and so to utilise them, to co-operate with them, to turn them from enemies into servants.

But men's mastery over natural forces has been offset by their own subjection to the means of production which they have developed in mastering them, and to their own products. In communist society, however, every obstacle to the furthest development of men's mastery arising from their own social organisation is removed. People now go forward without limit to know and control the forces of nature, to use them as servants, to remake

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ch. 15.

nature, co-operating with nature to make the world a human world since humanity is nature's highest product.

Hence the great achievements of the past and the present will be dwarfed by the transformations of nature wrought by communist society, the first beginnings of which are already evidenced in the grand construction plans of the first phase of communism.

The instrument of man's mastery is science. Hitherto science has been divided into two compartments—the science of nature and the science of society, the investigation of nature and the investigation of man. In communist production, science which serves the progress of humanity is one: its field is the single field of the means which man utilises for life and of the principles involved in his utilisation. It is the instrument for the limitless development of human capacities, of human life.

#### *The Role of Consciousness in Communist Society*

With communism, there disappears the last vestige of the domination of man by his own means of production and his own products. Henceforward man is fully the master of his own social organisation and increasingly the lord of nature. With this, as Marx said, the prehistory of mankind ends and human history begins.

Indeed, what most profoundly distinguishes men from animals is precisely man's consciousness of his own aims and his conscious utilisation of the laws of the objective world in pursuit of those aims. Hitherto men have mastered natural forces in the process of production, but have not been masters of their own social organisation. They have produced, but not been masters of their own means of production and their own products. In producing they have created social forces and set in motion economic laws which have ruled human destinies as an alien power. With communism, all that is ended. Human history has begun.

In communist society, a new and enhanced role is played by human consciousness. For the development of society is guided and controlled by people's consciousness of their own requirements. Production is brought fully under conscious social control. The development of society ceases to be determined by conflicts rooted in economic antagonisms, but proceeds according to an agreed plan, according to people's conscious intentions, devel-



oped by means of criticism and self-criticism. This new and enhanced role of consciousness in social life is brought forth under socialism, perfected with the transition to communism.

This should not be confused, however, with a different proposition, namely, that consciousness becomes the primary, the determining factor in social life.

That is not and never can be true. It is always true that consciousness is determined by social being, that being is primary and consciousness secondary, that consciousness is the reflection of being. In communism, men's consciousness of their own social existence and of the requirements arising from it is the agency by the operation of which social development proceeds. But this active social consciousness is precisely and only a reflection and consequence of social existence; and what it effects is not something initiated out of itself but something the need for which arises from the actual material conditions of life.

What is achieved in communist society was summed up by Engels as follows:

“With the seizing of the means of production by society, production of commodities is done away with, and, simultaneously, the mastery of the product over the producer. Anarchy in social production is replaced by systematic, definite organisation. The struggle for individual existence disappears. Then for the first time man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones.

“The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of nature, because he has now become master of his own social organisation. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so be mastered by him. Man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself.

“Only from that time will man himself, more and more con-

sciously, make his own history. Only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Future of Communist Society*

What will happen after communism?

This is a natural enough question, but one which we cannot possibly answer at present, or can answer only in the vaguest terms.

What we can know about communist society follows exclusively from what we already know about capitalist and socialist society. Thus we know that certain features of capitalist and socialist society, which we have analysed, will have to be eliminated, and we can work out in a general way how they will be eliminated and what sort of society will exist afterwards. Whatever goes beyond that we have no means of predicting.

The transition from capitalism to socialism is, as we now know (though Marx and Engels did not know it), a prolonged and uneven process, some nations achieving socialism while others still remain capitalist. It follows from this that, on a world scale, the transition from socialism to communism will also be a prolonged and uneven process, since some nations will advance to communism while others lag behind and may even still remain in the capitalist stage.

Hence it seems reasonably certain that communism will first come into existence on a national basis. And so, while the exchange of products as commodities within the communist national economy will be eliminated, there will still remain the exchange of products as commodities between different national economies.

When all nations are socialist, then this last feature of commodity production will at length become a hindrance to their common development. Then we may expect that national frontiers and foreign trade will gradually be eliminated and a world communist economy will gradually be developed— leading

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, ch. 3.

eventually to the dying away of national differences and the development of a world language and world culture.

“It is probable,” Stalin has suggested, “that, at first, not one world economic centre will be formed, common for all nations and with one common language, but several zonal economic centres for separate groups of nations, with a separate common language for each group of nations, and that only later will these centres combine into one common world economic centre, with one language common to all the nations . . . national differences and languages will begin to die away and make room for a world language, common to all nations. Such, in my opinion, is the approximate picture of the future of nations and of the way the nations will develop towards their future amalgamation.”<sup>1</sup>

When a world exists so completely different from our present world, how are we to say what the people who live in it will decide to do? Of course, we cannot say. And if we did say, they would take no notice of us, for what they do will be guided by their own requirements, and not by ours.

At most, we can venture to assert two propositions.

(1) In communist society, property has reached its highest stage of development. In Stalin’s words, “social property will be regarded by all members of society as the sacred and inviolable basis of the existence of society.”<sup>2</sup> Private property has ceased to exist. It is simply the case that people in association make use of all the resources of nature, including their own human resources, to satisfy all their needs. These resources belong to no one in particular, the products of associated labour belong to the whole of society, and means of consumption are distributed among the members of society according to their needs, as their own personal property for purposes of personal use. Property as we now generally understand it—as the ownership and control of means of production and products by particular individuals, groups and organisations—has, in fact, ceased to have any significance for production. That is what is meant by the highest stage of development of property.

If, then, property has indeed reached its highest development,

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*

it will never again be the case that people will feel the necessity of transforming property relations and instituting any higher form of property.

(2) At the same time, society will not stand still. There will take place from time to time new developments of the forces of production—what sort of developments, we do not know—and old forms of social organisation, old habits, ways of life, views and institutions, will be felt as a hindrance to this development and so will have to be changed.

Hence the contradiction between the old and the new—between old forms of association into which men enter in carrying on production and new forces of production—hitherto expressed as a contradiction between existing relations of production and new forces of production, which has always been the mainspring of human progress, will continue to operate—but in new forms. It will not take the form of a conflict between existing forms of property and the new requirements of social development, but will take other forms. And changes will not be effected by means of conflicts but by means of agreed decisions based on criticism and self-criticism.

At this point it is necessary to rein in the argument and bring ourselves back to present realities. When all mankind is free from exploitation, people will live without want, in security and happiness, and will be fully capable of taking care of the future. We need not further concern ourselves about their future problems, but rather about our own problems. For the future of mankind depends on how we solve the present contradictions of society.

We may remember the words of William Morris, after he awoke from his dream in which he was living in the communist future:

“All along, though those friends were so real to me, I had been feeling as if I had no business amongst them; as though the time would come when they would reject me, and say, ‘No, it will not do; you cannot be of us. Go back again, now *you* have seen us, and your outward eyes have learned that in spite of all the infallible maxims of your day there is yet a time of rest in store for the world, when mastery has changed into fellowship—but not before. Go back again, then, and while you live you will see all round you people engaged in making others live lives

which are not their own, while they themselves care nothing for their own real lives—men who hate life though they fear death. Go back and be the happier for having seen us, for having added hope to your struggle. Go on living while you may, striving, with whatsoever pain and labour needs must be, to build up little by little the new day of fellowship, and rest, and happiness.’

“Yes, surely! and if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ch. 32.

## CONCLUSION

What conclusions can we draw from the materialist conception of man and his social development?

(1) The epoch in which we live is the one in which mankind is finally taking the decisive step to the achievement of truly human conditions of existence. Historical materialism lights up the wonderful perspectives which lie before the present generation.

Hitherto, since the first phase of primitive communism, society has been based on the exploitation of the masses of working people. The wealth of the few has contrasted with the poverty of the many. The great advances of material production, which have created that wealth, have been achieved only at the expense of increased exploitation of the producers. The overwhelming majority have been denied the enjoyment of the culture the creation of which was made possible by their labour. There has been continual war of class against class and of people against people.

From such conditions of social existence mankind is emerging to create a new order of society in which exploitation of man by man is abolished, in which social production is subordinated to the aim of maximum satisfaction of the ever growing material and cultural needs of all the members of society, and in which the development of society no longer takes place through conflicts and upheavals but is consciously regulated in accordance with a rational plan.

All this has become necessary because the new forces of social production prove incompatible with private ownership of the means of production and private appropriation of the product. They can be fully utilised and developed only on the basis of social ownership and social appropriation.

Modern science and technique make it possible for the first time in human history for everyone to enjoy a high and rising standard of life, and for everyone to enjoy leisure, education and culture. To realise this possibility, society must take over control of the whole of production and plan it for the satisfaction of the needs of the whole of society.

That means that everyone will be able to enjoy without question the basic material necessities of life—good housing, food and the maintenance of health. Monotonous and arduous work will be eliminated by high technique, and all will be free to work

creatively. Work will cease to be a burden and become one of life's necessities, a matter of pride and pleasure. Rest and leisure, education and a cultured life, will be enjoyed by all. All will be able to raise their qualifications and develop their various abilities.—Such are the truly human conditions of existence which it is the goal of socialism to establish.

(2) Socialism can be established only through the action of the revolutionary class in modern society, the working class, in its struggle with the capitalist class.

Socialism cannot possibly be achieved by any gradual transition based on class collaboration, since by its very conditions of existence the capitalist class is bound to resist to the end the introduction of socialism, which would deprive it of its power and profits. On the contrary, it can be achieved only by the struggle of the working class to emancipate itself from capitalist exploitation. By emancipating itself from capitalist exploitation the working class will thereby emancipate society at large from all exploitation.

To achieve socialism the working class must unite its ranks and lead all the working people to struggle to end capitalist rule and establish a new democratic state, based on the rule of the working class in alliance with all the working people. The task of the people's state is then to defeat the resistance of the former oppressors and gradually to build socialism.

(3) To defeat capitalism and build socialism the working class must have its own political party, the Communist Party, equipped with scientific socialist theory and able to apply it.

“Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. . . . The role of vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party which is guided by an advanced theory.”<sup>1</sup>

In the struggle of the working class against capitalism a major role is still played by the spontaneous movement which arises as a result of the pressure of economic and political events. But this spontaneous movement of the masses must be guided, organised and directed—in other words, made into a conscious movement, aware of its immediate demands and aims and of the revolutionary goal of socialism. Otherwise it is inevitably defeated or dies out or is diverted into channels acceptable to the capitalists.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, ch. 1, D.

Consequently, the party can never rely upon the spontaneous movement but, on the contrary, must work to arouse and organise the mass movement and to provide it with socialist theory.

Through the experience of mass struggles the workers begin to be conscious of the antagonism of their interests with those of the employers, of the need to unite and organise. But this consciousness can become socialist consciousness only with the aid of theory, of science. Only with the aid of socialist theory can the working class see the need not only to fight for better wages but to end the wages system, and realise how to carry this fight through to victory. Thus what is necessary for the waging of the struggle for socialism is above all, as Marx and Engels taught, the union of scientific socialism with the mass working class movement.

(4) Today the scientific socialist theory of Marxism- Leninism is tried and tested and has proved its truth in practice. Guided and inspired by it socialism has been built in the Soviet Union, and the shape of the future communist society is becoming clear. Great works of peaceful construction are under way, man is remaking nature, and new socialist people are at work, more proud and free than any who have trod the earth before. In Europe and in Asia millions more have established people's democracy and are advancing to socialism. A new world has come into existence whose growth the forces of the old are utterly powerless to prevent.

Completely different is the world of dying capitalism, torn by insoluble crisis and conflict. Here the ruling monopolies strive to solve their problems and increase their profits by forcing down the people's standards, by deceiving the people and undermining their liberties, by piling up armaments and waging and preparing to wage aggressive wars of conquest. They pin their hopes for the future on the atom bomb, on napalm and bacteriological weapons. Their final accomplishment is the means for mass destruction.

Our final conclusion, then, is clear. Ail over the world the common people can and must unite to preserve peace. We must strive for co-operation with the countries which are already building socialism and guard their achievements. We must work for the ending of capitalism and establishment of socialism in our own country.



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*(1) Works by Marx and Engels*

For a general introduction to the principles of historical materialism should be consulted Engels' *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, and *Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx*, Marx and Engels' *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and Marx's Preface to *Critique of Political Economy*.

For further reading, Engels' *Anti-Dühring* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Rather more difficult are two earlier works, Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* and Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*.

The whole of the *Marx-Engels Correspondence* relates to historical materialism, but especially to be consulted is the selection of letters contained in Vol. II of *Marx-Engels Selected Works* (International Publishers).

A number of studies of special problems and periods by Marx and Engels are of first rate importance. First and foremost comes Marx's *Capital*, Vols. I, II and III, together with his booklet, *Wage Labour and Capital*. Lenin regarded *Capital* as the scientific demonstration of historical materialism, and it is the most important source of material concerning the Marxist science of society. Further material is contained in Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value*. Vitally important studies of particular historical events are contained in Marx's *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Class Struggles in France* and *The Civil War in France*, Engels' *The Peasant War in Germany*, and Marx and Engels' *Germany, Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, *The Revolution in Spain* and *The Civil War in the United States*.

*(2) Works by Lenin*

Lenin summed up and explained the principles of historical materialism in polemics against opponents, and made a tremendous new contribution to the science of society in his elucidation of social development in the period of monopoly capitalism and

the socialist revolution. Lenin's most important contributions to explaining the general theory of historical materialism are contained in *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, and *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, chapter 6; together with the popular exposition contained in his essay, *Karl Marx*. In *Imperialism*, Lenin explained the development of capitalism in its final monopoly stage; and in *The State and Revolution* he summed up and further developed the Marxist theory of the state and of the dictatorship of the proletariat. A shorter account of the state is contained in his popular *Lecture on the State*. Questions about the socialist state and the socialist revolution are dealt with in numerous works by Lenin, but specially to be consulted in this context are his *Economics and Politics of the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* and *Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*.

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