

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARX

## AN OUTLINE OF COMMUNIST THEORY

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Neither the current tactics nor the strategic goal of the Communist parties of the world - and of the Soviet Union - can be adequately understood without some knowledge of the basic "philosophy" or theory of the century-old revolutionary Marxist movement. The publication of the Communist Manifesto exactly one hundred years ago (January, 1848) initiated the era of "scientific" socialism, socialism professedly based not upon a sentimental attachment to the vision of a humanitarian future nor upon a program of "social reforms" within the structure of capitalist society, but upon a series of "scientific" analyses of the dynamics of capitalist society and a "proof" of its inevitable collapse, accompanied by a vague program of the post-capitalist development of a socialist society. The joint authors of the Manifesto, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, gave the movement its revolutionary Bible in a series of several major and countless minor writings which have been drawn upon, in one fashion or another, by almost all socialist movements of the past seventy-five years. During the early years of this century Marx's theories and program were expounded and amended by Lenin, the leader of the revolutionary (or Bolshevik) wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party, and with the successful assumption of power by this Party faction in the October Revolution of 1917, the basic writings of Lenin were added to the canon, and Marxism-Leninism became the revolutionary theory of the twentieth-century Communist movement. A few additions and some rigid reformulations of basic concepts by Stalin completed the theory of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, which today gives to the Communist movement its world view, its guide to action, and its ultimate goal.

#### Origins of Socialism and Communism

Socialism, in its special sense of a movement aiming at the collective organization of the community in the interests of all its members by means of the common ownership and collective control of the means of production and exchange, developed in the early 19th century as a result of the combined effect of the developing factory system produced by the Industrial Revolution and the ideas of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity engendered by the French Revolution of 1789-94.

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The first socialists were the so-called utopian socialists (Robert Owen in England, Fourier, St. Simon, Proudhon in France) who advanced various prescriptions for the cooperative control of industry (villages of cooperation, national workshops, communal estates) which were designed to eliminate the poverty and unemployment of capitalist society and to achieve a society in which all men (and women) would have the opportunity to develop their faculties to the utmost degree. The words "socialism" and "socialist" were first employed in English about 1830 to describe these idealistic reformers.

Utopian socialism held first place in the "radical" or reformist movements of western Europe up to the 1840's, when Marx and Engels began preaching their anti-utopian, "scientific" socialism. Marx derided the utopians as sentimental dreamers for believing that the "natural laws" of socialism simply had to be expounded to the propertied classes to be adopted and that no struggle would be required to achieve socialist society. Marx's "scientific proof" of the inevitable collapse of the capitalist system of private property, his insistent preaching of the necessity for revolutionary action to break the power of the ruling class, and his gradual success in gaining the acceptance of his theories by working-class groups and parties in the fifties and sixties spelled the end of utopian socialism as a political force, and "Marxism" has become an integral part of the workers' political and economic movement.

After the liquidation of the European revolutionary movements of 1848, and the subsequent political reaction, socialism of any sort survived only as the creed of isolated sects until the organization in 1864 of the International Working Men's Association (The First International) under the tutelage and theoretical direction of Marx and the succeeding development of increasingly strong national workers' parties in the countries of Europe: the Social Democratic Labor Party of Germany (1875), the French Socialist Party and, after its failure in the Paris Commune of 1871, the Parti Ouvrier (1875-6), the illegal Russian Social Democratic Party (1898), etc. The movements out of which these parties grew were more often called "Communist" in their

early stages, and the terms "socialist" and "communist" may for that period be considered broadly synonymous.

The Marxist socialist movement gradually developed, about the turn of the century, a basic split in the method to be followed in achieving socialist society. The revolutionary tactics clearly advocated by Marx were substantially "revised" or modified, particularly in the British and German parties (revisionism, reformism), and peaceful parliamentary methods of legal and constitutional reform were advocated by most of the "Social-Democratic" and "Labor" parties of the Marxist persuasion, with "revolutionary" groups generally in the minority. The historically most significant split occurred in the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1903. The Menshevik ("minority") faction advocated collaboration with middle-class parties in establishing a constitutional republic as a step to socialism, while the Bolshevik ("majority") faction under Lenin stood for a revolutionary transformation of Tsarist Russia to be carried out by the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Both groups quoted Marx -- the Mensheviks in accordance with the revised practices of the West European social democrats, and the Bolsheviks adhering to the revolutionary ideas of the Communist Manifesto of 1848 and the various pronouncements of the International Working Men's Association.

The first (March) Russian Revolution of 1917, carried through with the collaboration of Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries and middle-class Liberals, commanded the universal support of Socialists in all countries. The second (October) Revolution, by which the Bolsheviks, aided by a section of the Social Revolutionaries, seized power and proclaimed the "dictatorship of the proletariat", sharply divided European Socialism. The division was accentuated when the Bolsheviks, having established themselves in power, proclaimed themselves the Communist Party, established a new (Third) Communist International in opposition to the Social Democratic Second International, and set out to foster a world revolution on principles which they professed to derive directly from Marx's writings, and especially from the Communist Manifesto of 1848. The new Soviet Communist leaders then denounced the Social Democrats as "social traitors", guilty of the sin of repudiating

Marxism and collaborating with the bourgeoisie for the maintenance of capitalism; and the Social Democrats retorted by attacking the Communists as tyrants who had crushed out liberty and democracy in Russia, and had imposed their will by force on the mass of the common people.

European socialism as a whole was split by this conflict, with significant minorities, fractions, and groups breaking out of the old Socialist and Social-Democratic parties and forming new Communist Parties adhering to the Third International. The sharp divisions in the socialist movement helped prepare the way for fascism in Italy and Germany, and both Socialist and Communist parties found themselves hard-pressed by authoritarian governments of central and eastern Europe. The existence of a common enemy helped somewhat to produce local and temporary accommodation and collaboration, but even the war-time resistance effort failed to affect the basic hostility of the two warring camps. The tentative post-war sparring between the two camps in 1945-7 was abruptly terminated with the restatement, in the recent Nine-Party Cominform declaration, of the basic hostility of the revolutionary to the "democratic" Marxists.

#### Importance of Theory in the Communist Movement

Marxist theory is not simply a collection of political beliefs and economic dogmas, but a complete social philosophy which not only purports to explain all aspects of human society but also dictates what action must be taken to assist history in achieving the "inevitable" goal of a socialist society. Marxist theory is therefore "not a dogma, but a guide to action", and the inseparability of theory and action has been heavily stressed by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.

"Theory becomes a material force as soon as it has captured the masses." (Lenin)

"Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." (Lenin)

"Theory...alone can give to the movement confidence, guidance, strength and understanding of the inner relations between events; it alone can help practice to clarify the process and direction of class movements in the present and near future." (Stalin)

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Since theory determines the correct strategy and tactics of the proletarian movement, a major responsibility of the Communist Party is to preserve the correct theory and apply it accurately to the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary movement, testing it always in the crucible of revolutionary activity:

"The role of the vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by an advanced theory." (Lenin)

"Revolutionary theory is the generalization of the experience of the labor movement in all countries." (Stalin)

A large part of the Soviet Communist effort in the past thirty years has been directed at the maintenance of a uniformly interpreted theory inside the world movement. In almost the entire 20th century discussion of Marxist theory the writings of Marx and Engels and Lenin have been quoted with fundamentalist regularity. This pose of orthodoxy has, however, not precluded theoretical conclusions determined more by the strategic or tactical needs of the moment than by the actual words or intended meaning of Marx and Engels.

#### Theory in the Party

The Communist Party demands that every leader be a competent Marxist theoretician--in party parlance, he must be "politically mature". There are usually, however, among the top party leaders one or more men who are accepted by their colleagues as the most competent "Marxist dialecticians" and who are looked to for final theoretical interpretations of a situation or a policy: for example, Stalin and now Zhdanov in the CPSU, Duclos and Fajon in the CP France, Alexander Bittelman (and V. J. Jerome and Robert Weinstone) in the CPUSA.

All Party functionaries are expected to have a basic understanding of Marxist theory and be able to "guide" the thinking of Party members under their supervision. Errors Party functionaries commit are frequently ascribed to "political immaturity", that is, lack of understanding of Marxist theory. In the case of the Party rank-and-file, the Party constantly attempts to "educate" all its members through study groups, lectures, group discussion, and self-study, with the main emphasis throughout on theory. The basic reading for the rank and file of the

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Party membership is The Short History of the CPSU, Stalin's Problems of Leninism, and the Party press--not only the daily newspaper which all Party members must read, but also its weekly or monthly theoretical publications. Both functionaries and members are educated in Marxist theory, not only at the regular Party schools, but often in "special" schools at the regional level which are almost exclusively dedicated to theoretical education. In some countries non-Party "study groups", usually comprising white-collar workers, are established to provide theoretical education for "sympathizing" non-Party members or for members who, for a variety of reasons, do not carry a Party card.

#### Appeal and Strength of the Marxist Theory

Marx's social philosophy reflected the rise to consciousness and finally to political power of the working-class. Marx set himself, first, to interpret democracy and liberalism as ideologies peculiar to the middle classes, and secondly to create a social philosophy for the working-class, or proletariat. His detailed criticism of capitalist society and his call to action for the world proletariat has exerted an enormous appeal not only to members of the industrial working class but also to countless "intellectuals" of the bourgeois class whom Marx assailed. It is of some importance to recognize the major factors in the Marxist approach to life which are primarily responsible for this appeal.

In many respects Marxism exerts the attractions normally found in the major religions, the religion in this case promising Paradise on this side of the grave. For the believer, Marxism represents a system of ultimate ends giving the full meaning of life and providing absolute standards for judging events and actions, and at the same time prescribes a plan of salvation which acts as a guide to those ends. With all its pretended scientific and rational approach to the problems of society, there is throughout Marx and modern Marxist theory a powerful element of emotional exaltation: the so-called "scientific" socialism of Marx actually ends up very close to blind faith.

Within this "religious" context a basic appeal of Marxism is the absolute dogma that Marxism is true, that it simply formulates the inevitable course of history and therefore invites the believer to cooperate in the inevitable march of civilization. The dogma that socialism is inevitable, irrespective of human desires or will, possesses a strong attraction for those who are temperamentally disposed to subordinate themselves to a superior force.

The primary appeal of Communist doctrine is, of course, to those elements of society who receive the smallest material share of the benefits accruing from the capitalist system. It offers to the many who feel thwarted and ill-treated an explanation of their failure and arrays on its side all those who take exception to one or another aspect of society as it is currently constituted. There is little question that one of the major strengths of Marxism is its energetic appeal to familiar facts (unemployment, bad housing, crises, etc.) which helps enormously in obtaining agreement on the explanation which Marxism gives to those facts. The uncritically minded "masses" can hardly be expected to supply complicated alternative explanations of these same facts.

Finally, one must not underestimate the appeal which any dynamic and uncompromising revolutionary program holds for many individuals and many groups in any period, but more particularly in the unstable and challenging conditions of the 20th century. It capitalizes upon the impulse to action of the born radical, of the fanatic, of the severely repressed. The more unstable the conditions in any society and the greater the want or distress, the stronger the appeal of the extremist whether of the Left or the Right.

#### Critique of Marxist Theory

The Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist doctrine is presented in the following pages in a series of nineteen propositions, or summary statements, which are briefly discussed and illustrated from the theoretical texts of Marxism. The principal statements of theory and their broader significance have been presented as objectively and "correctly" as is possible for a non-Marxist. The task of reducing the complicated

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formulas and analyses of Marxist theory to a simple and economical form is not easy, and expert Marxists would no doubt find distortions and inadequacies in the presentation of their favorite political, economic, or revolutionary doctrines. It is nonetheless felt that the nineteen propositions as stated and annotated adequately formulate the main outlines of Communist theory in relatively understandable terms for readers who are not acquainted with the distinctive vocabulary and complicated dialectics of Marxist thinking.

It would be an unwise compliment to the Marxist view of life to permit many of its propositions to stand without evaluation or criticism. In many cases, the reader will immediately grasp for himself the unfounded assumption, the disagreement with fact, the prejudiced perspective, and the errors of prophesy which so richly decorate the pages of Marxism. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to present a detailed analysis of the errors, confusions, assumptions, and inconsistencies of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, particularly since the theory itself is here presented in highly simplified terms. It is nonetheless desirable to provide an overall evaluation of its principal weaknesses and defects, with appropriate references to the pertinent propositions presented in the text. The critique can therefore be only partially understood until the main points of the theory itself have been absorbed.

The principal weakness of revolutionary Marxist theory is its rigid, dogmatic, and uncritical formulation of a series of assumptions, and assumptions only, into a set of "inevitable", necessary "laws": the pages of Marxism are larded with constant repetitions of "irresistible", "deterministic", "iron necessity", "universal", "absolute", "infallible", "compulsive". As the theory has developed from the Communist Manifesto on, its formulas, abstractions, and hypotheses have become progressively more and more hardened to the point where analyses and statements of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin are, must be, accepted as gospel truth: quotations from the Marxist "Bible" simply cannot be challenged or amended, only accepted and applied. This purportedly "scientific" theory, by any standards whatever, does not satisfy the most elementary requirements of the scientific method, or even of common sense. To illustrate only with a few of the more conspicuous cases:

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The Dialectical Method (para.2) is basic to all Communist political and economic analysis: although nature and society display conflicts, "contradictions", or "opposites" (not a novel discovery of Marxism), acceptance of this hypothesis (unproved, naturally, since it is impossible) as the sole "law" of development in a simple 1-2-3 succession ignores fact and limits theory to a completely unrealistic view of the historical process.

The Materialist Interpretation of History (para. 3), "the central point around which the entire network of ideas... turns" (Lenin), was never advanced by Marx to assert that economic forces are exclusively responsible for all events and changes in human society, but the subsequent almost exclusive emphasis on this one factor makes the Marxist blind to the importance of countless other factors, the recognition of whose existence would vitiate a great many Marxist analyses: religious fanaticism, dynastic ambition, tribal or racial hatred, "individual caprice", etc.

The Doctrine of Class Struggle (para. 4) takes the concept of "social classes" (a concept not new with Marx and which any historian normally accepts) and converts it into a single, exclusive focus for all social and political fact. The Marxist's narrow view of "classes" and class-divisions misses reality on two major counts: (1) no such watertight division exists, say, between the people (and their descendants) who are supposed to be "capitalists" once and for all, and others who are supposed to be "proletarians" once and for all (a characteristic feature of modern "classes" is the incessant rise and fall of individual families into and out of the "upper" and "lower" classes and the growth of a large "middle" class); (2) "class antagonism" is highly exaggerated in the case of recent capitalist society since the relation between classes is normally one of cooperation, however argumentative, for a common good.

The economic arguments adduced as proof for the Inevitable Breakdown of Capitalism rest upon a completely unacceptable theory (Labor Theory of Value, para. 7 ), a deduction from this theory (Theory of Surplus Value, para. 8) which can itself be challenged on a number of grounds, a statistically disproved "law" (Law of the Diminishing Rate of Profit, para. 9), and a completely erroneous forecast (Theory of the Growing Misery of the Proletariat, para. 11): the constant improvements over the past century in the position of the worker under capitalism presents the strongest evidence against the entire Marxist economic analysis dedicated to proving the "inevitable" collapse of the capitalist system.

The Marxist prides himself on the ability which his "scientific" theory gives him to understand the basic forces at work in a given situation and to forecast their "inevitable" course of development. It is then a fair test of Marxist theory to measure its success in prophesying history--and its record of failure here is enormous and not to be clouded over by the fact that Lenin and Trotsky made some brilliant "guesses" in the Russia of 1917. Even in the first stages of Marxist analysis, from 1848 on, Marx and Engels were misled countless times (by trade depressions, nationalistic revolts, international wars) to foresee both "bourgeois" and "proletarian" revolutions just around the corner - in each case they fizzled, and retrospective analyses of why society did not behave the way it was supposed to simply underlined the inadequacy of the "theory" to provide "scientific" analyses and forecasts. The record of Bolshevik theoretical leadership after the October Revolution in Russia is characterized by even grosser, and in this case bloody, failures in recognizing "revolutionary situations". The Comintern began its career with a series of grotesque errors based upon completely faulty analyses: from the abortive putsches and "revolutions" in Germany up to 1923, the fiasco of the Soviet Republic in Hungary, and the ill-conceived march on Poland in 1921 to the theoretically and strategically inept direction of the Chinese Revolution in 1927. There is little reason to suppose that history has appreciably adapted itself to Marxist theory in the course of the past twenty years.

Perhaps the greatest theoretical weakness of Communist theory, even from the Marxist point of view, is its failure to provide anything more than a hazy, utopian promise of a distant Paradise as the final goal of all Communist effort. Marx himself never provided anything tangible on the institutions, methods, or mechanisms of the socialist, or communist system, nor even on the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat which is destined to usher in socialist society. He stops short with the successful end of the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power, and the expropriation of private property. It is precisely here, as the Bolsheviks found out, that the real problems begin--and the "theory" has nothing but a few broad formulas to offer. This is utopia - building with a vengeance, and the true Marxist would be justified in resenting the fact that his theory, however "scientific" for the destructive phase of Communist action, leaves him as much a sentimental idealist or "utopian" in the constructive phase as those early French and English "utopian socialists" whom Marx assailed with such vehemence a century ago.

This theoretical inadequacy is publicized by the enormous gulf that exists between the broad formulas of Marxism for the period of the proletarian dictatorship and the course of events in the only actual proletarian dictatorship so far realized. Marxist theory and Bolshevik practice are strange bedfellows. Whatever the Bolshevik theoreticians have had to say about domestic policy changes and the difficulties for the "Socialist Fatherland" living in a "capitalistic encirclement", the present spectacle of Soviet Russia should provide ample testimony to the meaning for human progress of the Communist utopia. Step-by-step the Revolution has adopted both "feudal-absolutist" forms of government and "bourgeois-capitalist" economic principles and practices to support its hold over the "toiling masses" of Soviet Russia, while its "progressive" social reforms in most cases do not reach the levels attained by the "bourgeois democracies" of the reactionary world. The final test of theory, by Marxist standards, lies in practice: the theory is there to read, the practice there to see. The Marxist reads the theory which thus far has frequently blinded him to the reality.

DOCTRINE OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE: MARX'S THEORY OF HISTORY

Materialism 1. THE DEVELOPMENTS OF HUMAN HISTORY, IN COMMON WITH THE HISTORY OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD ITSELF, ARE EXCLUSIVELY DETERMINED BY MEASURABLE MATERIAL FORCES WORKING ON HUMAN BEINGS.

The basic philosophical position of Marxism assumes that nothing exists except matter and its movements and changes, and that the history of the human race is determined by these material forces to the complete exclusion of such non-material, or spiritual, forces as "God", "Providence", a "universal will", an "absolute idea", etc. It stands in direct opposition to any form of philosophic Idealism which, in general, maintains that "ideas" (inside the human mind or in the mind of some supernatural deity) are the only true reality, and that material things merely reflect these "ideas". Marxism is thus directly opposed to both the Christian and the philosophical concepts underlying European and American political and moral values.

For the Marxist, the "mind", "soul", or "spirit" is the product of matter and has no separate or superior existence:

"There is nothing in the world but matter and motion." (Lenin)

"Matter is primary. Sensation, thought, consciousness are the supreme product of matter organized in a particular way." (Lenin)

The Marxist is clearly hostile to any form of religion or belief in a supernatural being exerting influence on the world or human affairs:

"There are no things in the world which are unknowable, but only things which are still not known, but which will be disclosed and made known by the efforts of science and practice." (Short History)

"Religion is the opium of the people." (Marx)

"God is (from the historical and practical standpoint) primarily a complex of ideas begotten by the crass submissiveness of man, by external nature, and by class oppression--ideas which tend to perpetuate this submissiveness, to deadend the force of the class struggle... Now (1913), both in Europe and in Russia, every advocacy or justification of the idea of god, even the most subtle, even the best-intentioned, is a justification of reaction." (Lenin)

"Socialism...enlists science in the struggle against religious obscurity and emancipates the workers from belief in a life hereafter by welding them together for a real fight for a better life on earth." (Lenin)

This "scientific materialism" also leads to a precise stand on the age-old issue of "free will": the problem of whether men can make "free" choices or decisions independent of the material forces around them. Marxism does not stand for a rigid determinism which would not permit any freedom of choice or decision (such a fatalism would make it pointless for any one to attempt to do anything), but maintains that free will can operate only within the possibilities allowed by material forces and material laws which operate with "blind necessity". The Marxist holds that he alone understands these material forces and laws and is accordingly the only one who can make "free" or intelligent decisions:

"Freedom is the appreciation of necessity...Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with real knowledge of the subject." (Marx)

"...until we know a law of nature, it, existing and acting independently and outside our mind, makes us slaves of 'blind necessity'. But once we know this law, which acts independently of our will and our mind, we become the lords of nature." (Lenin)

The Marxist is, therefore, in his own view the only true "scientist" of nature and society.

Dialectics

2. THESE MATERIAL FORCES WORK THEMSELVES OUT IN HUMAN HISTORY BY A DIALECTICAL PROCESS: BY THE CONFLICT OF THE CONTRADICTIONS OR OPPOSITES INHERENT IN NATURE AND SOCIETY AND THEIR RESOLUTION INTO A NEW AND "HIGHER" CONDITION.

Dialectics\*, essentially the process of working out the contradictions within nature and society, is based on the following principles:

- a. Nature is a connected unified whole in which all things are organically connected with each other.
- b. Nature is in a state of continuous movement and change.
- c. Development is not a simple process of growth, but a process in which minor, imperceptible quantitative changes (e.g. water becoming ice or steam) pass into qualitative changes rapidly and abruptly.
- d. Internal contradictions are inherent in all things, and the struggle between these contradictions or opposites constitutes development (e.g., in biology, the struggle for existence; in physics, action and reaction, movement of electrons and protons, positive and negative electricity; in society, the class struggle; etc.). Consequently, the Marxist feels that nothing can be understood if taken by itself; that what appears stable and durable in nature or society is not as important as that which is arising and developing; and that development is not a gradual, steady progress, not a "harmonious unfolding" of phenomena, but a series of sudden "leaps" and "revolutions."

\*Dialectics, with the Greeks, was the art of arriving at the truth by disclosing the contradictions in an argument and overcoming them by a superior synthesis.

All life and history are thus in constant movement - a movement of dynamic change - and humanity is viewed as moving "upward" along a zigzag path following an iron "law of motion": every event or state of things (thesis) has within it the seed of its own destruction, its opposite or contradiction (antithesis or negation) which develops in conflict with it, and issues in a new and higher synthesis ("negation of the negation").

"Contradiction is the root of all motion and of all life."  
(Hegel)

"What Marx and Engels call the dialectical method... is nothing more or less than the scientific method in sociology, which consists in regarding society as a living organism in a constant state of development...., the study of which requires an objective analysis of the relations of production that constitute the given social formation and an investigation of its laws of functioning and development." (Lenin)

"To the dialectical philosophy, nothing is final, absolute, or sacred; everything is transient, subject to an uninter-rupted process of becoming and disappearing, of an unending ascent from the lower to the higher." (Engels)

The dialectical philosophy is fundamental to the entire position of Marx, Lenin, Soviet communism, and revolutionary Marxists in general - it provides the theoretical basis for the "theory of the class struggle", furnishes "scientific proof" of the necessity for revolutionary change, and guarantees the finality of communist society as the goal of humanity.

Materialist Interpretation of History 3. THE BASIC CONFLICTS OF THE DIALECTICAL PROCESS IN HUMAN SOCIETY OPERATE IN TERMS OF THE CHANGING FORCES OF PRODUCTION (TOOLS, MACHINES) WHICH PLACE MEN IN CERTAIN RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEN ("PRODUCTION RELATIONS"); THESE PRODUCTION RELATIONS DETERMINE THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND INTELLECTUAL PROCESSES OF LIFE.

From the viewpoint of dialectical materialism, the history of society is a science based on the study of the "laws of development" of society; the material life of society is primary, its "spiritual" life a secondary reflection of the material life. The ideas, political institutions, legal systems, religions, arts, etc., of any society are "formed" by the conditions of its material or economic life.

What are these "conditions of material life of society". Not, says the Marxist, geographical environment or the growth of population, but the techniques for procuring the means of life (food, clothing, houses, etc).

To produce these goods men and instruments of production (tools, machines, etc.) are necessary, and in the process of production men enter into relationships with each other. Together, these represent the mode of production which is always in a state of change and development by changes in the productive forces (stone tools - metal tools - handicrafts - manufacture - machines - large-scale machine industry) which bring about changes in the production relations. Five types of production relations have existed in human society:

- primitive communism: community owns the means of production, labor is in common.
- slavery : slave-owners own the means of production and the worker.
- feudal system : feudal lord owns the means of production and partially owns the worker (serf).
- capitalist system : capitalist owns the means of production, but not the worker who is "free", yet must sell his labor power to the capitalist.
- socialist system : society owns the means of production and all workers "cooperate" in the process of production.

The primary factor determining the history of society and the conditions in any one society is accordingly the economic factor: the relationship between men (master and slave, lord and serf, capitalist and worker) involved in the process of producing goods. Marx himself never held that the economic factor alone produced all the other characteristics of a society, but that it determined the origin of its political, social, and intellectual elements - it was "the strongest, most elemental, and most decisive" factor.

"...what individuals are depends upon the conditions of material production." (Lenin)

"...the intellectual behavior of human beings arises as the direct outcome of their material behavior." (Marx)

The entire fabric of any society (forms of government, legal system, religion, ethics, economic theory) therefore reflects the values of the ruling class, the class which owns the means of production:

"People always were and always will be the stupid victims of deceit and self-deceit in politics until they learn to discover the interests of some class behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises.....every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is maintained by the forces of some ruling classes..." (Lenin)



"Just as man's knowledge reflects nature..., which exists independently of him, so man's social knowledge (i.e., the various views and doctrines--philosophical, religious, political, and so forth) reflects the economic system of society." (Lenin)

So, for capitalist society:

"Taken as a whole, the professors of economics are nothing but scientific salesmen of the capitalist class, while the professors of philosophy are scientific salesmen of the theologians." (Lenin)

"...the ruling bourgeoisie...devotes hundreds of millions of rubles from the profits squeezed out of the toilers to the support of religion." (Lenin)

"...bourgeois science and philosophy...are officially taught by official professors in order to befuddle the rising generation of the possessing classes and to "coach" it against the internal and foreign enemy (socialism)." (Lenin)

Doctrine of Class Struggle

4. THESE PRODUCTION-RELATIONS RESULT IN CERTAIN SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN WHICH ARE EMBODIED IN A CERTAIN SET OF CLASS-RELATIONSHIPS: THESE CLASSES ARE THE BASIC FACTORS IN THE HISTORICAL PROCESS, AND THE HISTORICAL DIALECTIC WORKS ITSELF OUT IN A SERIES OF CLASS-STRUGGLES.

In general, any society other than a communist society is divided into two primary classes: those who control the means of production (tool-owners -- exploiters) and those who do not (tool-users or the exploited). Basically, the struggle of these classes is "the battle of developing production" -- the changing production forces of a society cannot develop fully within the old production relations and the conflict between them leads to an overturn of the old relations. For example, the developing forces of production in the feudal period gradually reached the point when the rising middle class of merchants and manufacturers were compelled to rid themselves of the controls and restrictions of the old ruling class, the feudal landlords -- the revolutions of 1688 in England, 1789-94 in France, and March 1917 in Russia brought the "bourgeois" class into power in place of the feudal aristocracy. In the next stage, according to the Marxist, the proletariat will replace the bourgeoisie in order further to expand the powers of production through social ownership of the means of production.

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"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonism. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other-- bourgeoisie and proletariat." (Marx)

"...anybody who ignores the class struggle in capitalist society...entirely ignores the real content of the social and political life of this society, as regards the realisation of what he desires, inevitably condemns himself to hover in the sphere of pious dreams. The failure to understand the class struggle makes him a reactionary, for appeals to "society" and to the 'state', that is, to the ideologists and politicians of the bourgeoisie, can only confuse the Socialists, lead them to accept the bitterest enemies of the proletariat as allies, and hamper the workers' struggle for emancipation instead of helping to strengthen, elucidate and better organize this struggle." (Lenin)

Marx's theory of social classes is an analytic tool which, by linking the economic interpretation of history with Marx's concepts of the capitalistic economy, brings to a single focus all social facts and becomes the organic basis for the Marxist conception of social life and history. For Lenin "the doctrine of the class struggle is the focal point of his whole system of views".

Theory of  
the State

5. THE CLASS-STRUGGLE IS ESSENTIALLY A POLITICAL AS WELL AS AN ECONOMIC CONFLICT SINCE THE STATE IS PRIMARILY AN ORGAN OF CLASS-COERCION FOR THE "RULING" CLASS.

The Marxist views the "state" as a "special apparatus for the systematic application of force" used by the ruling class to maintain its power over the oppressed classes. The State developed in society only after the communal, non-class, primitive society had given way to an owner-class within society which set up and used the State to protect its "private property" both against the ruled class and against the threat of the ruling class of other societies.

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"There was a time when there was no state. It appears wherever and whenever a division of society into classes appears. Whenever exploiters and exploited appear." (Lenin)

"The state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another." (Lenin)

"The state is the product...of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises when, where and to the extent that class antagonisms cannot be objectively reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable." (Lenin)

"According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it creates "order" which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collisions between the classes." (Lenin)

This "oppression" of one class by another which controls the bureaucracy, police, and military power of the State is considered obvious in such a government as an absolute monarchy or an aristocracy, but the Marxist holds that this holds true of the democratic state as well:

"In a democratic republic... 'wealth wields its power indirectly, but all the more effectively', first, by means of the 'direct corruption of the officials' (America); second, by means of the 'alliance between the government and the Stock Exchange' (France and America)." (Lenin quoting Engels)

"...the more democratic (the republic) is, the cruder and more cynical is the rule of capitalism. One of the most democratic republics in the world is the United States of America, yet nowhere...is the power of capital, the power of a handful of billionaires over the whole of society, so crude and so openly corrupt as in America. Once capital exists, it dominates the whole of society, and no democratic republic, no form of franchise can alter the essence of the matter. The power of capital is everything, the stock exchange is everything, while parliament and elections are marionettes." (Lenin)

"To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to misrepresent the people in parliament is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism. Parliament itself is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people'." (Lenin)

The Marxist considers the best form of State under the capitalistic system to be the democratic republic, not because it is any less the tool of the ruling capitalist class, but because it provides the most ideal conditions (free speech, free association, general education, etc.) under which the proletariat can carry on its class-fight against the bourgeoisie:

"Democracy is of great importance for the working class in its struggle for freedom against the capitalists. But democracy is by no means a boundary that must not be overstepped; it is only one of the stages in the process of development from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism." (Lenin)

"We are in favor of a democratic republic as the best form of state for the proletariat under capitalism; but we have no right to forget that wage-slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a 'special repressive force' for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, no state is a 'free' or a 'people's State'." (Lenin)

"...political liberty will primarily serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and will not improve the conditions of the workers, but only the condition for their struggle against this very bourgeoisie." (Lenin)

In countries where, as in the Russia of March 1917, the political development has not reached the stage of a democratic republic, the Communists will unite with the bourgeois class to fight for political liberties and a representative government, but this program is only preparation for the real class-fight which can be launched efficiently only within the "bourgeois republic" itself.

6. IN MODERN CAPITALIST SOCIETY THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC CONFLICT BETWEEN THE OPPOSING CLASSES OF THE BOURGEOISIE AND THE PROLETARIAT HAS REACHED THE STAGE WHERE THE PRODUCTIVE POWER OF SOCIETY HAS OUTGROWN THE SYSTEM OF PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND THE EXPLOITED PROLETARIANS CAN LIBERATE THEMSELVES FROM THE YOKE OF THE BOURGEOISIE ONLY THROUGH THE SEIZURE OF THE (BOURGEOIS) STATE POWER AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CAPITALIST TO A SOCIALIST SYSTEM. THIS DEVELOPMENT IS INEVITABLE SINCE THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM IS DOOMED TO FALL BECAUSE OF THE "CONTRADICTIONS" INHERENT IN IT.

The "proof" for this inevitable downfall of capitalism is contained in the economic theory of Marxism, the essential elements of which are contained in Marx's detailed and voluminous Capital. Marx's proof drew upon the evidence afforded by the development of the capitalist system up to the mid-nineteenth century, before the advent of extensive monopolies and powerful labor-unions; his analysis was brought up to date by Lenin's analysis of the "Imperialist Stage" of capitalism reached in the late nineteenth century. The steps in this analysis are outlined in propositions 7 - 13.

THE INEVITABLE BREAKDOWN OF CAPITALISM: MARXIST ECONOMIC THEORY

Labor Theory of Value 7. THE VALUE OF ALL COMMODITIES (GOODS) IS DETERMINED BY THE QUANTITY OF HUMAN LABOR EXPENDED ON THEIR PRODUCTION.

Accepting the theory advanced by his "capitalist" predecessors, but working out its implications along completely new lines, Marx ascribed the real source of value in goods meant for exchange or sale to the amount of labor necessary to produce them:

"As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labor time." (Marx)

The common denominator lying beneath the relative values and prices of goods in the market was conceived to be the number of hours of "socially necessary" labor required for their production (the amount of labor for any given task is determined by the average skill and technical ability existing at a particular stage of the society's development). Thus "human labor in general", allowing for differences between skilled and unskilled, efficient and inefficient, technically advanced and technically retarded labor, is the source of value of all goods produced by society: raw materials, land, water-power do not contribute any value whatever beyond the amount of labor power that is expended in exploiting them in the production process.

Theory of Surplus Value 8. THE ONLY SOURCE OF A CAPITALIST'S PROFIT, THEREFORE, LIES IN THE EXCESS OF LABOR-TIME HE FORCES THE LABOR TO WORK BEYOND THE HOURS NEEDED TO PRODUCE THE NECESSITIES (FOOD, CLOTHING, ETC.) REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN THE LABORER.

Theory of Exploitation CAPITALIST PROFIT ACCORDINGLY VARIES IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE AMOUNT OF TIME THE LABORER IS FORCED TO WORK BEYOND THE TIME REQUIRED TO EARN THE SUBSISTENCE WAGES HE IS PAID FOR HIS LABOR-POWER.

If, in the course of six hours' work, a laborer produces enough goods or "value" to pay for his own wages (which the capitalist must give him to feed, clothe, and house the laborer and allow him to keep up the supply of labor by breeding children), then a twelve-hour day would mean that during the second six hours of the working-day the laborer is simply "working for nothing", with the results of his labor

going to the capitalist to pay his profits (the rent and interest the capitalist pays to other capitalists are just as much "unearned" profit as the manufacturer's profit). This exploitation of the laborer by the capitalist who owns the machinery, factories, and raw materials needed to produce goods rests at the bottom of the entire capitalist system of "private property", "wage-slavery", and "profits":

"The essence of capitalism...is the appropriation by private persons of the product of social labor organized by commodity production." (Lenin)

"Capital 'vampire-like' only lives by sucking labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks." (Lenin)

"The rate of surplus value, all other circumstances remaining the same, will depend on the proportion between the part of the working day necessary to reproduce the value of the laboring power and the surplus time or surplus labor performed for the capitalist. It will, therefore, depend on the ratio in which the working day is prolonged over and above the number of hours during which the working man would only reproduce the value of his laboring power or replace his wages." (Marx)

Theory of Accumulation

9. BECAUSE OF CONSTANT TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND THE COMPETITION OF FELLOW-CAPITALISTS, THE CAPITALIST IS COMPELLED TO TURN INTO ADDITIONAL CAPITAL ("SAVE" AND "INVEST") THE GREATER PART OF THE SURPLUS-VALUE HE HAS WRESTED FROM HIS WORKERS.

Law of Diminishing Rate of Profit

THIS CONSTANT INCREASE IN THE MACHINES (CAPITAL) DIMINISHES THE CAPITALIST'S PROFIT (WHICH VARIES SOLELY WITH THE AMOUNT OF LABOR POWER EXPLOITED).

In analyzing the beginnings of the capitalist system of commodity production, Marx describes the "primitive accumulation" of capital, which paved the way for the capitalist system, as resting upon force, robbery, and the subjugation of the "masses": the land of the feudal serfs or peasants was "stolen" from them by the growing class of merchants and manufacturers who also "forced" the independent artisan out of business by developing mass-production. The subsequent increase in the means of production (factories, machinery, railroads, power-plants, etc.) is solely financed by the surplus-labor of the "wage-slaves" who, with their means of production taken away, are compelled to hire themselves out to the capitalist.

The Marxist accepts this development as historically inevitable and as serving the creative purpose of increasing society's ability to produce more goods for human needs. It cannot, however, go on indefinitely because it tends to decrease more and more the profit of the capitalist because he uses more and more machines, and fewer and fewer workers--and without profit there is no reason for his continuing in business.

Theory of Expropriation

10. THE CAPITALIST COMPENSATES FOR THESE SMALLER PROFITS NOT ONLY BY CONSTANTLY INCREASING THE EXPLOITATION OF SUCH WORKERS AS HE DOES EMPLOY, BUT ALSO BY CHEAPENING COMMODITIES THROUGH INCREASING THE SIZE OF INDUSTRIAL PLANTS AND UNITS OF CONTROL (CORPORATIONS, HOLDING COMPANIES, TRUSTS, CARTELS). IN THIS LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE OF COMPETITION THE CAPITALISTS TEND TO DESTROY EACH OTHER BY CONCENTRATING CAPITAL INTO FEWER AND FEWER HANDS.

This "inevitable" development of capitalist production toward larger and larger units of ownership and control, with its attendant concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a small ruling "clique", had this compensation for Marx: the workers, hitherto disorganized and scattered, now are brought into closer association with each other in the large plants and corporations, and they are enabled to forge a single-minded unity in their opposition to the capitalist "exploiters":

"That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the laborer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many laborers. This expropriation is accompanied by the immanent laws of capitalist production itself, by the centralization of capital. One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralization, or the expropriation of many capitalists by few, develops, on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labor process,...the transformation of the instruments of labor into instruments of labor only usable in common, the economizing of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialized labor, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market, and with this, the international character of the capitalist regime." (Marx)

Furthermore, the concentration of capital into larger units of control will facilitate the socialization or "nationalization" of the means of production when the time comes.

Theory of  
Industrial  
Reserve Army

11. THIS DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHLY MECHANIZED, LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRY INEVITABLY CREATES LARGE-SCALE UNEMPLOYMENT - A PERMANENT "SURPLUS POPULATION".

Theory of the  
Growing Misery  
of the  
Proletariat

AS WELL AS THE TRANSFER OF COUNTLESS SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CAPITALISTS INTO THE PROLETARIAT WHO GRADUALLY BECOME MORE AND MORE IMPOVERISHED AND MISERABLE.

"In proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the laborer must grow worse. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole." (Marx)

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital who usurp and monopolize all the advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with it, too, grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers." (Marx)

"Poverty is 'the revolutionary and destructive trend which will overthrow the old society'." (Marx)

Marx, in the fifties and sixties, analyzed this "increasing misery" of the proletariat as consisting in the continual lengthening of the working day, decreasing wages, increasing permanent unemployment, speed-up practices, progressive deterioration of factory buildings and equipment and of the health and life-span of the laborer.

The glaring faults of this part of Marx's forecast has provoked major corrections by subsequent Marxist theoreticians, especially Lenin (see below).

Under-  
Consumption  
or Over-  
Production  
Theory

12. IN THE ADVANCED STAGES OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT RECURRENT CRISES OR DEPRESSIONS ARE CREATED BY THE INABILITY OF THE MASSES TO BUY THE EVER-INCREASING FLOW OF GOODS.

Theory of the  
Inevitable  
Catastrophe

THESE CRISES ARE PERIODIC, INESCAPABLE, AND OF INCREASING SEVERITY UNTIL THEY FINALLY CULMINATE IN A BREAKDOWN OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM: A BREAKDOWN PRODUCED BY THE SYSTEM'S OWN ECONOMIC CONTRADICTIONS AND BY THE REVOLT OF THE INCREASINGLY MISERABLE PROLETARIAT.

An over-simplified analysis of the "internal contradictions" of the capitalist system results in the following "vicious circle":

Private ownership of the means of production leads to competition in the open market, with the cheapest producer winning out.



The cheapest commodities are produced by the most efficient machinery and factory installations.

More machinery means fewer workers.

Fewer workers mean less surplus value (and less profits) and less consumption.

but - to increase consumption (purchasing power) requires more jobs for workers.

More jobs require more capital (machines).

More capital (greater accumulation) requires increased rate of surplus value.

Increase of surplus value demands cheaper commodities (to reduce the cost of labor).

Cheaper commodities mean more machines.

More machines mean more capital---

which brings us back to where we started.

Whatever the theoretical value of Marx's analysis of the inner contradictions of capitalism and its inevitable downfall, the evolution of the capitalist system since his day has effectively disproved the accuracy of his forecast. The "theory of the inevitable catastrophe", however, remains a cornerstone of Communist ideology, but Marx's analysis has been replaced by Lenin with a more up-to-date foundation based upon the "new" stage of capitalism which has developed since Marx's death. "Leninism" is "Marxism in the epoch of imperialism", for Lenin's analysis of 20th century "world monopoly capitalism" and its inevitable downfall (summarized in para. 13) now has become the orthodox theory.

13. SINCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM IN ANY ONE COUNTRY GRADUALLY ELIMINATES PROFITS (PARA. 11), CAPITAL SEEKS OUTLETS IN COUNTRIES IN WHICH THERE IS STILL LABOR TO BE EXPLOITED AND ADDITIONAL MARKETS TO COMPENSATE FOR THE INADEQUACY OF THE DOMESTIC MARKET (PARA. 12). THIS "IMPERIALIST" STAGE OF CAPITALISM LEADS TO THE INEVITABLE CLASH OF RIVAL IMPERIALISMS (THAT IS, THE CAPITALIST CLASSES OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES) AND THE EVENTUAL DOWNFALL OF CAPITALISM BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS.

Lenin transferred the analysis of capitalism from the national (Marx) to the international level, as capitalism itself developed into a "world-front" within which the advanced capitalist countries sought to escape

from the "pressure of accumulation on the rate of profit" by "exploiting" the less advanced areas of the world. For Lenin "imperialism" (starting about 1890) represented the period of "monopoly capitalism" during which highly centralized industrial capital (giant corporations, trusts, monopolies) fused with banking capital (the great banks and banking firms) to form "finance capital", which extended its exploitation over the entire world.

"Imperialism is capitalism in that stage of development in which the domination of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the partition of all the territories of the globe among the great capitalist powers has been completed." (Lenin)

This now, and "last", phase of capitalism ("monopoly is the transition from capitalism to a higher system"), temporarily overcomes the contradictions of a capitalist system confined to one country, but it contains within itself three basic contradictions which make its collapse inevitable:

a. The old conflict of labor vs. capital becomes even more sharp as the workers realize ever more clearly that they can escape the control of the monopolistic trusts and banks only through armed revolt. The capitalists can "bribe" the workers in their own country for a time through the "super-profits" wrung from the exploited colonial areas, but the world-wide solidarity of the proletarian front cannot permit this "betrayal" of one section of the proletariat by another.

b. A new conflict, that between one bourgeoisie vs. a rival bourgeoisie, introduces another contradiction which has thus far led to two world wars, both of which were essentially a fight for markets, sources of raw materials, and outlets for finance-capital between the advanced capitalist countries (Britain-France vs. Germany-Austria in 1914, and Germany-Japan vs. Britain-France-USA in 1939-41):

"There is and there can be no other way of testing the real strength of a capitalist state than that of war. War does not contradict the principles of private property--on the contrary, it is a direct and inevitable development of those principles. Under capitalism the even economic growth of individual enterprises, or individual states, is impossible. Under capitalism, there is nothing else that periodically restores the disturbed equilibrium than crises in industry and wars in politics." (Lenin)

The final upshot of this international rivalry in the bourgeois camp will be the internal disintegration of capitalist strength to the point where conditions will be ripe for the seizure of power by the proletariat.

c. Imperialism has also sharpened the conflict of colonial people vs. the imperialist powers who are exploiting them, and the bourgeoisie of the advanced capitalist countries are faced with their constant opposition and hostility. The colonial peoples as a whole therefore represent additional "reserves" of the proletarian revolution within the advanced capitalist countries.

A broad portrayal of this Leninist analysis has been sketched by Stalin in his Foundations of Leninism:

"The domination of finance capital in the advanced capitalist countries; the issue of stocks and bonds as the principal operation of finance capital; the export of capital to the sources of raw materials, which is one of the bases of imperialism; the omnipotence of a financial oligarchy, a consequence of the domination of finance capital -- all these reveal the parasitic and brutal character of monopolist capitalism, make the yoke of the capitalist syndicates and trusts much more intolerable, increase the indignation of the working class against the foundations of capitalism and drive the masses to the proletarian revolution in which they see their only means of escape...

The growth of the export of capital to the colonies and subject countries, the extension of 'spheres of influence' and colonization to the extent of seizing all the territory of the globe, the transformation of capitalism into a world system of financial bondage and of the colonial oppression of the vast majority of mankind by a few 'advanced' countries-- these factors have reduced the several national economic systems and national territories to links in a single chain called world economy and have divided the population of the world into two camps: on the one hand, a small number of 'advanced' capitalist countries which exploit and oppress vast colonies and dependencies; on the other hand, the immense majority in the colonial and subject countries, compelled to fight to liberate themselves from the imperialist yoke. In consequence we have an intensification of the revolutionary crisis in the colonial countries and strengthening of the spirit of revolt against imperialism on the external front, the colonial front. The monopolistic sway over 'spheres of influence' and over colonies; the uneven development of the different capitalist countries which leads to a bitter struggle between the countries which have already seized the territories of the globe, and those countries which want to receive their 'share'; imperialist wars, the only method of restoring the disturbed 'equilibrium' -- all these reinforce the third front, the inter-capitalist battle-line, which weakens imperialism and facilitates the union of the first two fronts against imperialism, the front of the revolutionary proletariat and that of colonial emancipation.

From this we come to the inevitability of wars under imperialism and to the inevitability of a coalition between the proletarian revolution in Europe and the colonial revolution in the East, leading to the formation of a united world front of the revolution as against the world front of imperialism. From these deductions Lenin draws the general conclusion that 'imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution'."

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT: MARXIST-LENINIST POLITICAL STRATEGY

Necessity of Revolutionary Action 14. THE BREAKDOWN OF CAPITALISM, THOUGH INEVITABLE, WILL NOT OF ITSELF PAVE THE WAY FOR THE COMING OF SOCIALISM, BUT MUST BE ASSISTED AND ENGINEERED BY THE PROLETARIAT EMPLOYING REVOLUTIONARY ACTION AGAINST THE BOURGEOIS STATE.

Since the bourgeois state will resist by force (police, army) any attacks on the capitalist system, it is axiomatic for the communist that socialism can be achieved only by the use of force:

"The weapons of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons. Physical force must be overthrown by physical force." (Marx)

"Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with the new." (Marx)

"Revolutions are the locomotives of history." (Marx)

As Marx pointed out, the bourgeoisie themselves came into power by a revolutionary overthrow of the old feudal ruling class (Revolution of 1688 in England, of 1789 in France, of March 1917 in Russia), but, once in power, they use the state to preserve "order", that is, the "order" of their system.

The basic goal in the class-struggle pursued by all socialist parties in all countries is the appropriation of the means of production and the means of exchange by the proletariat and the abolition of the wage-system and the production relations of capitalism. The fundamental split on the method of achieving this goal has divided socialists for the past century into two hostile, warring camps: the forceful, revolutionary, anti-parliamentary, dictatorial method of Communism: i.e., the Communist and Revolutionary Communist (Trotskyist) parties, and the so-called peaceful, evolutionary, parliamentary, "democratic" method of social democracy: i.e., the various Socialist, Social-Democratic, Democratic Socialist, and Christian Socialist Parties. The Communist case for the necessity of revolution has figured in the forefront of communist-socialist polemics from the time of Marx to the present--a very few both theoretical and "practical" arguments have been monotonously repeated in the Communists' highly emotional and vituperative fight against the Social Democratic "revisionists", "opportunists", "lackeys of the bourgeoisie", "renegades", "social fascists", "reactionaries", ad infinitum.

On the theoretical level Communist doctrine attacks with its heaviest weapons the "theory of spontaneity", the theory that the labor movement should be allowed to confine its efforts to the parliamentary struggle and to demand only such changes and reforms as are "acceptable to and can be carried out under capitalism" (Stalin). For the Communists this following of the "line of least resistance", this "pure and simple trade unionism", fails to arouse the workers to an awareness of their class interests and keeps them hoodwinked by the liberal bourgeoisie who will permit them only such concessions as they can afford to make without seriously affecting their own interests and power. For the revolutionary Marxist this "opportunism" means confining the workers' party to a party of "social reform which presupposes the preservation of capitalist rule" -- it is a betrayal of the working-class to the interests of the bourgeoisie, "a renunciation of the revolutionary struggle, of Socialism and of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (Stalin).

"The substitution of the proletarian state for the bourgeois state is impossible without a violent revolution." (Lenin)

Leninist  
Theory of  
Proletarian  
Revolution

15. THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION PROVIDES THE ONLY MEANS OF SEIZING AND DESTROYING THE BOURGEOIS STATE AND THE CAPITALISTIC ECONOMY IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE BASIS FOR A SOCIALIST SOCIETY.

A major "progressive" contribution of capitalism has been the development of the urban factory workers into a powerful, organized group which not only has the greatest class interest in promoting the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, but is the only class (as opposed to the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie) capable of defeating them:

"The position of the factory worker in the general system of capitalist relations makes him the sole fighter for the emancipation of the working class, because only the higher stage of development of capitalism, large-scale machine industry, creates the material conditions and the social forces necessary for this struggle." (Lenin)

The monopolistic-imperialistic stage of capitalism has provided the following "conditions" highly favorable to the success of the proletarian revolution:

- a. The "parasitic and brutal character of monopolist capitalism" has intensified the revolutionary crisis on the domestic proletarian front in the "mother-countries".

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b. The world-front of capitalist exploitation of colonies has intensified the revolutionary crisis on the colonial front.

c. The "inter-capitalist battle-line" weakens imperialism and contributes to the union of the first two fronts.

Where will the revolution begin:

"Formerly, the reply used to be--where industry is most perfected, where the proletariat forms the majority, where civilization is most advanced, where democracy is most developed.

The Leninist theory of the revolution says--no! The front of capital will not necessarily be pierced where industry is most developed, and so forth; it will be broken where the chain of imperialism is weakest, for the proletarian revolution is the result of the breaking of the chain of the imperialist world front at its weakest point...

In 1917 the chain of the imperialist world front happened to be weaker in Russia than in the other countries. It was there that it was broken and afforded an outlet to the proletarian revolution." (Stalin)

Once begun, how will the revolution continue? The answer, from Marx to Stalin, is that the revolution will be "permanent" (uninterrupted), "that it will continue from country to country until the complete victory of Socialism is guaranteed":

"It is our aim to make the revolution permanent, until all the more or less propertied classes have been deprived of power, until the proletariat has conquered state power, until the association of proletarians not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world will be sufficiently advanced to put an end to competition among proletarians of all these countries and until at least the chief forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians." (Marx)

The conflict between Stalin and Trotsky in the 20's over the strategic line to be adopted by the new Soviet state (the development of socialism in the USSR or the promotion of revolution in other countries) essentially involved a difference in timing and not a theoretical difference over the future course of the revolution. Stalin's thesis that "Socialism is possible in one country" provided a short-term answer: the final victory of socialism is possible only with successful revolutions "in at least several countries":

"...the task of the victorious revolution consists in doing the utmost attainable in one country for the development, support and stirring up of the revolution in all countries!" (Stalin, quoting Lenin)

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"...overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and establishing the power of the proletariat in a single country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of Socialism... It is...the essential task of the victorious revolution in one country to develop and support the revolution in others. The revolution in a victorious country ought not to be considered as a self-contained unit, but as an auxiliary and a means of hastening the victory of the proletariat in other countries." (Stalin)

The goal of the proletarian revolution is to destroy the bourgeois state and to transform the means of production into state property:

"...the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., in the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible." (Marx)

The revolution cannot simply "take over" the bourgeois state, but must destroy it:

"All the revolutions which have occurred up to now have helped to perfect the state machine, whereas it must be smashed, broken. This conclusion is the chief and fundamental thesis in the Marxian doctrine of the state." (Lenin)

"...if the state is the product of irreconcilable class antagonisms...it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible, not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class..." (Lenin)

The bourgeois state apparatus, however, must be replaced by another instrument of power:

"The proletariat needs state power, the centralized organization of force, the organization of violence, for the purpose of leading the great mass of the population--the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians--in the work of organizing socialist economy." (Lenin)

Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

16. THE PROLETARIAT WILL CONSOLIDATE THE VICTORIOUS REVOLUTION BY ESTABLISHING A DICTATORSHIP AGAINST THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY (BOURGEOIS) FORCES AND WILL MAINTAIN THAT DICTATORSHIP DURING THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM.

After the proletariat has captured power, it is faced with three immediate tasks:

"(a) to break the resistance of the landed proprietors and capitalists now overthrown and expropriated by the revolution, and to liquidate every attempt they make to restore the power of capital;

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(b) to organize construction in such a way as will rally all toilers around the proletariat and prepare the way for the liquidation of classes;

(c) to arm the revolution and to organize the army of the revolution for the struggle against the external enemy and for the struggle against imperialism." (Stalin)

The "special organ" created to carry out these tasks is the dictatorship of the proletariat which employs state power to break the resistance of its class enemies:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat is the fiercest, sharpest and most merciless war of the new class against its more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased ten-fold by its overthrow...The dictatorship of the proletariat is a stubborn struggle--sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative--against the forces and traditions of the old society." (Lenin)

The strength of the overthrown bourgeoisie resides in its international ties ("the power of international capital"), in its retention of money, movable property, technical and managerial ability, and superior education, and in the continued existence in post-revolutionary society of innumerable small-scale producers who must be "converted" to socialist principles to avoid the rebirth of capitalism. The dictatorship of the proletariat is "a revolutionary power based on violence against the bourgeoisie", a

"domination of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, a domination that is untrammelled by law and based on violence and enjoys the sympathy and support of the toiling and exploited masses." (Stalin)

In short, there cannot be "democracy for all" under the dictatorship, but democracy for the proletariat and the poor and dictatorship for the bourgeoisie:

"...the period of transition from capitalism to communism... inevitably becomes a period of unusually violent class struggles in their sharpest possible forms and, therefore, during this period, the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial in a new way (against the bourgeoisie)." (Lenin)

The organizational form of this dictatorship will be the soviets, or "peoples' councils":

"The soviets are the organizations which organize the masses themselves directly, i.e., the most democratic, signifying the most authoritative, organizations of the masses, that provide them with the maximum facilities for participating in the building up of the new state and its administration... The Soviet power combines the legislative and executive



functions in a single state body and replaces territorial electoral divisions by units of production, i.e., factories and workshops, and thereby connects the workers and the laboring masses in general directly with the apparatus of state administration and teaches them how to administer the country." (Stalin)

"The republic of soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies not only represents a higher type of democratic institution...but is also the only form capable of insuring the least painful transition to Socialism." (Lenin)

The soviet power is also

"the most international of all state organizations in class society, for by extirpating every kind of national oppression and basing itself on the cooperation of the toiling masses of the various nationalities, it facilitates the unification of these masses into a single union of states." (Stalin)

The period of the dictatorship of the proletariat will be a prolonged and dynamic struggle:

"You will have to go through fifteen, twenty or even fifty years of civil and international war, not only to change relationships but also to change your own selves, to render yourselves fit to assume the political reins." (Marx)

"The transition from capitalism to Communism represents an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has terminated, the exploiters will inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this hope will be converted into attempts at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters...will throw themselves with redoubled energy and implacable hatred into the battle for the recovery of their lost 'paradise'..." (Lenin)

"We must...regard the dictatorship of the proletariat, the transition from capitalism to Communism, not as a fleeting period replete with "super-revolutionary" deeds and decrees, but as an entire historical epoch full of civil wars and external conflicts, of persistent organizational work and economic construction, of attacks and retreats, of victories and defeats." (Stalin)

"...the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but for the entire historical period between capitalism and 'classless society', communism." (Lenin)

Role of  
the Party

17. THE REVOLUTION AND THE DICTATORSHIP CANNOT BE EFFECTIVELY CARRIED OUT AND MAINTAINED BY THE PROLETARIAT AS A WHOLE, BUT REQUIRES THE LEADERSHIP OF A "VANGUARD" OF THE PROLETARIAT, THE PARTY, WHICH ALONE CAN PROVIDE THE ORGANIZATION AND THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT WHICH REVOLUTIONARY ACTION AND RULE CANNOT BE SUCCESSFUL.

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The Party is a "detachment of the working class", not an ordinary detachment, but

"the vanguard detachment, a class-conscious detachment, a Marxist detachment of the working class, armed with a knowledge of the life of society, of the laws of its development and of the laws of the class struggle, and for this reason able to lead the working class and to direct its struggle." (Short History)

The Party is not a mass party, a "circle" of sympathizers and coworkers, but an ideological and action elite, "the political leader of the working-class". In addition, the Party provides "the military staff of the proletariat":

"I have spoken...of the difficulties encountered in the struggle of the working class, of the complicated nature of this struggle, of strategy and tactics, of reserves and maneuvering operations of attack and defence. Who can understand these complicated conditions, who can give correct guidance to the vast masses of the proletariat? Every army at war must have an experienced staff, if it is to avoid certain defeat. All the more reason, therefore, why the proletariat must have such a general staff if it is to prevent itself from being routed by its accursed enemies. But where is this general staff? Only the revolutionary party of the proletariat can serve as this general staff. A working class without a revolutionary party is like an army without a general staff. The Party is the military staff of the proletariat." (Stalin)

In order to play this role, the Party must be a highly organized detachment, with its own discipline binding upon all its members, for if it were simply a loose political association of members, it could never achieve the "united will" and the "united action" required to direct the proletarian struggle. In order to function properly and "to guide the masses systematically", it must be organized on the principle of centralism.

"having one set of rules and uniform Party discipline, one leading organ--the Party Congress, and in the intervals between congresses--the Central Committee of the Party; the minority must submit to the majority, the various organizations must submit to the center, and lower organizations to higher organizations." (Short History)

In order to preserve the unity of its ranks, "the Party must impose a common proletarian discipline, equally binding on all Party members, both leaders and rank-and-file". The "iron discipline" demanded of all Party members

"does not preclude but presupposes criticism and conflicts of opinion within the Party. Least of all does it mean that this discipline must be 'blind' discipline. On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude but presupposes

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conscious and voluntary submission, for only conscious discipline can be truly iron discipline. But after a discussion has been closed, after criticism has run its course and a decision has been made, unity of will and unity of action become indispensable conditions without which Party unity and iron discipline in the Party are inconceivable." (Stalin)

There is therefore no room for "factions" in the Party, and an unconditional "duty" of the Center is to exterminate completely all factionalism, just as it must continuously purge the Party of all "opportunist elements", notably the petty-bourgeois groups (trade-union leaders, peasants, small tradesmen and intellectuals) who join the ranks of the proletariat and "introduce an element of hesitancy and opportunism, of disintegration and lack of self-confidence". Only thus can the Party remain single-minded and powerful.

All Party members must be active members of some Party organization: "the Party does not need members who shrink from Party discipline and fear to join the Party organization". The Party is, further, "the highest of all forms of organization" of the working class and "guides" all the other organizations which the working class has developed in its struggle against the capitalist system: trade unions, cooperatives, factory and shop organizations, parliamentary fractions, non-party women's associations, the press, cultural and educational organizations, youth leagues, etc. The Party is,

"by reason of its experience and authority, the only organization capable of centralizing the leadership of the struggle of the proletariat and in this way transform each and every non-party organization of the working class into a serviceable functioning body, a transmission belt linking it with the class..."

This does not mean, of course, that non-party organizations like trade unions, co-operatives, etc., must be formally subordinated to Party leadership. It means simply that the members of the Party who belong to these organizations and doubtless exercise influence in them, should do all they can to persuade these non-party organizations to draw nearer to the Party of the proletariat in their work and voluntarily accept its political guidance." (Stalin)

It therefore becomes obligatory for the Party to maintain the closest possible connections with the "masses", for without the confidence and support of the "working-class millions" the Party can do nothing:

"The distinction between the vanguard and the main body of the working class, between Party members and non-Party members, will continue as long as classes exist...But the Party would cease to be a party if this distinction were widened into a rupture; if it were to isolate itself

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and break away from the non-Party masses. The Party cannot lead the class if it is not connected with the non-Party masses, if there is no close union between the Party and the non-Party masses, if these masses do not accept its leadership, if the Party does not enjoy moral and political authority among the masses." (Stalin)

This highly organized, highly disciplined, theoretically expert, and practically experienced vanguard Party is a "weapon in the hands of the proletariat for the conquest of the dictatorship where that has not yet been achieved; for the consolidation and extension of the dictatorship where it has been already achieved" (Stalin).

"The Party would not rank so high in importance and it could not overshadow all other forms of organization of the proletariat if the latter were not face to face with the question of power, if the existence of imperialism, the inevitability of wars and the presence of a crisis did not demand the concentration of all the forces of the proletariat on one point and the gathering together of all the threads of the revolutionary movement to repose them in one hand, to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The working class needs the Party first of all as its general staff, which it must have to effect a successful revolution... The proletariat needs the Party not only to achieve the dictatorship, it needs it still more to maintain and extend its dictatorship in order to attain complete victory for Socialism." (Stalin)

COMMUNIST SOCIETY: MARXIST MYTH AND STALINIST REALITY

"Socialism",  
the First  
Phase

18. THE TRANSITION FROM CAPITALISM TO COMMUNISM UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT IS A PERIOD OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION TO THE FIRST, OR "LOWER", PHASE OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY: SOCIALISM.

The extended transition period to Communism is initiated politically with the replacement of the bourgeois state by the dictatorship of the proletariat, economically with the seizure of the means of production by the state (para. 16). The society which will emerge from this revolutionary period, primarily dedicated to the complete destruction of all remnants of capitalist institutions and habits of mind, will not be a fully developed communist society, but only its partial fulfillment:

"What we have to deal with here is a communist society not as it has developed on its own foundations, but on the contrary as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect economically, morally and intellectually still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges." (Marx)

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Economically, with the means of production now belonging to "the whole of society", each member of society performs a certain amount of "socially necessary" labor and is "paid" according to the work he performs. Since men are "unequal" in ability, health, number of dependents, etc., this apparent equality still represents a basic inequality among men, for "equal right" is made to apply to different people with varying abilities and needs:

"...with an equal output and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another and so on. To avoid all these defects, right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal." (Marx)

Hence, according to Lenin, "the first phase of communism cannot produce justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still exist..." In short, although the means of production are owned "in common", the unequal distribution of goods and the inequality of "bourgeois rights" continue to exist so long as goods are divided according to the amount of work performed.

"The socialist principle: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat', is already realized; the other socialist principle: 'An equal amount of labor for an equal quantity of products', is also already realized. But this is not yet communism, and it does not abolish "bourgeois right", which gives to unequal individuals, in return for an unequal amount of work, an equal quantity of products." (Lenin)

These defects, according to Marx,

"are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birthpangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and the culture development thereby determined."

Since this "bourgeois right" is the only practicable standard of economic justice at this stage of development, there is politically still need for the state, not only to safeguard the public ownership of the means of production, but also to safeguard the "equality" of labor and the "equality" in the distribution of goods which, in socialist terms, are actually inequality, and therefore require force to protect them. This increasingly "democratic" state provides an apparatus for the people themselves to manage society during this socialist phase:

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"Accounting and control--these are the principal things that are necessary for the "setting up" and correct functioning of the first phase of communist society. All citizens are transformed into the salaried employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. All citizens become employees and workers of a single national state 'syndicate'. All that is required is that they should work equally--do their proper share of work--and get paid equally. The accounting and control necessary for this have been so utterly simplified by capitalism that they have become the extraordinarily simple operations of checking, recording, and issuing receipts, which anyone who can read and write and who knows the first four rules of arithmetic can perform...

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

But this 'factory' discipline, which the proletariat will extend to the whole of society after the defeat of the capitalists and the overthrow of the exploiters, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is but a necessary step for the purpose of thoroughly purging society of all the hideousness and foulness of capitalist exploitation, and for the purpose of advancing further." (Lenin)

'Communism"  
the Second  
Phase

19. THIS FIRST PHASE OF SOCIALISM WILL GRADUALLY DEVELOP INTO THE HIGHER PHASE OF COMMUNISM IN WHICH GOODS ARE DISTRIBUTED ACCORDING TO NEED, THE STATE AND THE PARTY DISAPPEAR, AND MEN LIVE IN COMPLETE EQUALITY AND FREEDOM.

As the first phase of socialist society progresses, the conditions for complete communism will be gradually achieved:

"In a higher phase of communist society after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not merely a means to live but has become itself the primary necessity of life; 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 fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'." (Marx)

The higher phase of communism will have been reached economically when people have progressed socially and psychologically to a point when they do not work simply "for a living" and no longer demand to be rewarded according to performance, to a point

"when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social life and when their labor is so productive that they will voluntarily work according to their ability. "The narrow horizon of bourgeois right", which compels one to calculate with the shrewdness of a Shylock whether he has not worked half an hour more than another, whether he is not getting less pay than another--this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for society to make an exact calculation of the quantity of products to be distributed to each of its members; each will take freely 'according to his needs'." (Lenin)

Lenin, countering the "bourgeois savants" who declare such a society to be a "pure utopia", insists that

"it has never entered the head of any Socialist to 'promise' that the higher phase of communism will arrive; and that great Socialists, in foreseeing its arrival, presupposed both a productivity of labor unlike the present and a person unlike the present man in the street who...is capable of damaging the stores of social wealth 'just for fun', and of demanding the impossible."

With the achievement of economic communism both in production and distribution, the State becomes superfluous, and government is replaced by administration:

"As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection...there is nothing more to be repressed, which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary...The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the process of production. The state is not 'abolished', it withers away." (Engels)

"Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes, only then does 'the state...cease to exist', and it 'becomes possible to speak of freedom'. Only then will really complete democracy, democracy without any exceptions, be possible and be realized... Communism alone is capable of giving really complete democracy, and the more complete it is the more quickly will it become unnecessary and wither away of itself." (Lenin)

With the disappearance of the state (and of the Party, which also no longer has a function), democracy, or "formal equality", is superseded by real equality:

"As soon as equality is obtained for all members of society in relation to the ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labor and equality of wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of going beyond formal equality to real equality, i.e., to applying the rule, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". By what stages, by what practical measures humanity will proceed to this higher aim---we do not and cannot know."

With the achievement of the higher phase of Communism, society reaches the goal of its long development: men live in perfect political and economic freedom and equality, the inexorable law of the historical dialectic apparently ceases to operate, and the "prehistory of the human race" comes to an end as human life is for the first time guided by human (Marxist) intelligence.