

COMMUNISM TODAY

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**MARX
AND
INDIA**

by

G. ADHIKARI

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FROM THE 5TH OF MAY THIS YEAR India, together with the rest of the world, is observing the 150th birth anniversary of Karl Marx, the founder and father of scientific socialism and of the international communist and workers' movement.

Progressive mankind in saluting the memory of a man, whose ideas, revolutionary work and life laid the foundations—ideological, theoretical and practical—of a new epoch in the social history of mankind, the epoch of mighty struggles to end the last social formation based on exploitation of man by man—capitalism, the epoch of building socialism—the transition to the creation of a truly humane civilisation.

We are living through that epoch. Already in one-third of the world his ideas are being realised—not in the sense of the fulfilment of a prophesy, but through the heroic struggles and sufferings of the working class and the toiling people, led by parties, concretely applying a well worked-out science to the actual condition in their respective countries.

But when Marx was labouring to perfect his ideas through his life of struggles and sufferings, he was slandered, persecuted and hounded out from country to country by reactionaries. The working class responded to the call of the 'manifesto' of the Communist League founded by Marx and Engels, and in class battles of 1848, in Paris and Berlin, workers held the street for three days. The first volume of the original German edition of his *Das Kapital* was sought to be killed in silence by the bourgeoisie but found a warm response among the German workers. It is significant that the first foreign language mass edition of the work was brought out in France in 1872 (10,000 in instalments) and in the same year in Russia (3,000).

The First International of Workingmen's Association (1864) owing allegiance of the workers of two continents, which he founded, was the precursor of the worldwide international communist movement of today. It guided the historic Paris

Commune of 1871—the first state of the dictatorship of the proletariat which lasted for only three months. The October Socialist Revolution of 1917 led by the Bolshevik Party and Lenin established the irreversible victory of Marxism. It realised the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* and the ideas of the Paris Commune.

The victory of the workers and peasants of Russia over the imperialist intervention (1918-21), the historic victory of the Red Army over the vanguard of imperialism (1941-45) proved the invincible vitality of Marxism, of victorious socialism as against the moribund forces of capitalism. The socialist system emerged, burying capitalism in one-third of the world. The system of colonialism crumbled. The dawn of freedom began for hundreds of oppressed nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, including our own.

Such is the triumphal march of the ideas of Marx during the last 120 years.

That is why all over the world the great mass of progressive mankind join in saluting the memory of one whose great revolutionary, scientific, internationalist and humanist ideas illuminate the path of the working class and the oppressed people, struggling to build a really humane society.

In our own country, the ideas of Marx became first known to a narrow circle towards the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th. First Dadabhoi Naoroji at the end of the 19th century and later Madame Cama and Shree Rana in 1908 are known to have contacted the international socialist movement, the Second International, founded in the lifetime of Engels. A life of Karl Marx in Malayalam was published in the days of the First World War. Dharmanand Kosambi, father of D. D. Kosambi, is reported to have delivered a lecture on the life of Karl Marx about the same time in Poona. Lala Hardayal's article on Karl Marx is also of the same period.

Apart from this, there is a reference to an attempt by someone to contact the First International in the fourth volume of the recently-published *Minutes of the General Council of the First International*. In the minutes of 15 August 1871, it is recorded that 'a letter from Calcutta asking for powers to

start a section in India' was read. Karl Marx was present at the meeting. The footnote to this entry, given by the editors of the volume, quotes a report of the same meeting which appeared in a contemporary British weekly *The Eastern Post* which gives an extract from the letter from India: '...great discontent exists amongst the people, and the British government is thoroughly disliked. The taxation is excessive and the revenues are swallowed up in maintaining a costly system of officialism. As in other places the extravagancies of the ruling class contrast in a painful manner with the wretched condition of the workers, whose labour creates the wealth thus squandered. The principles of the International would bring the mass of the people into its organisation if a section was started.' The reference is interesting but nothing can be said until an investigation is made in our country as to the authenticity of the letter.

The ideas of Marx, however, began to grip the masses in our country to a considerable extent only after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution and under its impact in the twenties and thirties. They became an influential force among the working class and the intelligentsia already in the course of the struggle for independence.

II

Young Marx lived and worked in the days when capitalism had emerged in Europe as a new social system and was growing with the vigour of youth.

Those were the days when bourgeois revolution was triumphing, was giving death-blows to feudalism and serfdom, when the rule of feudal kings and privileged classes was being overthrown.

Those were the days when rapid advances in natural science and in materialist philosophy were undermining the basis of superstition and orthodoxy.

Those were the days when industrial revolution was transforming society. A new class, the working class, the class of proletarians was arising—was being organised and united by the new condition of its life and work, was becoming class-cons-

cious, was evolving ideas of socialism as in France, was fighting the battle for democracy as in Germany and Britain.

Those were the days when the ruling bourgeois class yet flaunted the banner of liberty, equality and fraternity. They boasted of having rid society of privileged classes and made it an association of 'free producers'—a market society where equals were exchanged, where labour was supposed to be paid its due—10-hour wages for 10 hours of work! In fact, their boast arose from the fact that in bourgeois society exploitation was concealed and not so open as in former days and was sought to be further covered up under fine phrases.

The dominant thought-currents of those days were three:

- Materialist philosophy of revolutionary France; later there was the utopian socialism of the revolutionary proletarian movement.
- Speculative German idealist philosophy of Hegel, Kant and Fichte.
- British political economy of Adam Smith and Ricardo.

These were the three sources of the ideas which Marx evolved, and which, as is well known, had three components:

- Philosophy of dialectical materialism, including historical materialism.
- Scientific political economy.
- Scientific socialism—historic revolutionary role of the working class and its state.

Marx was influenced by these thought-currents of his day. He assimilated them, but was not satisfied with them. He developed his own thought in struggle with the bourgeois currents, building on their rational kernel while negating their essence. Thus Marx's developed thought was a devastating *critique* of these bourgeois thought-currents and a weapon of their revolutionary negation.

Marx's developed thought, with its three components, did not emerge ready-made. Marx's ideas evolved from those of revolutionary democracy of his time to the finished theory of proletarian scientific communism. This evolution took place through years of hard struggle, painstaking work and through

checking and rechecking with the realities of life and class struggle.

Evolution of Marx's ideas in the early forties, before he, together with Engels, formulated the *Communist Manifesto*, was greatly influenced by his identification with the democratic struggle in Germany and with the revolutionary proletarian movement and trends in France.

Participation in the democratic struggle in Germany, against what he called 'the unstormed Bastilles' of reaction there, helped him to break with the idealism of Hegel.

Similarly his identification with the proletarian movement in France, with the trends of militant materialists and socialists there, facilitated his break with the conceptions of Adam Smith and Ricardo and to go forward to the discovery of the theory of surplus value, which was the key to his penetrating analysis of the capitalist process of production.

I am not going into the evolution of Marx's ideas in the early forties, into how Marx became a Marxist. Pseudoresearch workers of the bourgeoisie pick out contradictions between the ideas of young Marx and the system of his developed thought with a view to distort or discredit the latter. This is because they want to deny the most natural evolution of thought which took place under the impact of the democratic struggle of the masses, of the class struggle of the proletariat.

I want to highlight some aspects of this evolution which will enable us to see the main features of his developed thought.

Marx did not allow himself to be imposed upon by the achievements of contemporary bourgeois society which was then ascendant by its philosophy, by its political economy, or by its loudmouthed claims to be the standard-bearers of liberty, equality and fraternity. By developing a method intensely critical and revolutionary, Marx proved that the vaunted achievements of the bourgeoisie, which he did not minimise, were not bringing a millennium for the poor masses, but only colossal accumulation of wealth for the new propertied class. He proved that the new trends were an apologia for this privileged class, the bourgeoisie, to hide its exploitation of the toilers. He also proved that the new productive forces brought into being a

new working class which was not just an exploited class but a class which was being organised and united by the very process of production itself to be the future grave-digger of capitalism and the builder of a new social order.

Thus it was at a time when capitalism was in the ascendant, when its innercontradictions had hardly begun to reveal themselves, that Karl Marx with his friend Friedrich Engels, produced the *Communist Manifesto* which proved to be a veritable *janma-kundali* of capitalism.

In the course of the evolution of his thought, Karl Marx made two leaps—one, from speculative philosophical communism of the contemporary German philosophy to proletarian communism; and the other, from the dialectics of the spirit to the dialectics of the material existence.

Speculative philosophical communism (Hegel) talked of the alienation of man—of the human spirit brought about by modern civilisation, but could not give any practical solution because it idealised and mystified the present social order and the state. Marx pinpointed the alienation in the concrete, bringing it down to the reality of the day—of the capitalist society—the alienation of the labouring man vis-a-vis private property in the means of production. The expropriation, i.e. alienation of the surplus labour of the working man that takes place in the process of capitalist production adds up to a pile of accumulated wealth, becomes a mighty power standing above and against the labour of man, dehumanising him. This—the real alienation of man in capitalist society—cannot be ended until class struggle rises to the pitch when private property is abolished and classless society emerges. Thus Marx very early came to recognise the historic role of the working class, and of class struggle itself as a weapon of social change. Thus the thought of Marx became proletarian communism, the revolutionary world outlook of the working class as evolved later in the *Communist Manifesto* and later works.

Another important turning point in Marx's evolution of thought was the leap he made from the dialectics of the idea of Hegel to the dialectics of material existence—of nature and society. It is said that Marx put the dialectics of Hegel, which

was standing on its head, back on its feet. What does this mean?

To Hegel, the movement, the evolution of world phenomena of nature and society, was nothing but the movement and the evolution of the world spirit, of the 'idea'. This movement and evolution in its most general form he codified in laws and categories of dialectics which he attributed to the 'idea', to the 'world spirit'.

The dialectics of Hegel which was expressed in idealistic form had nevertheless a rational kernel. It was something higher than the dialectics of the Greek and Indian philosophers. The dialectics of Greek philosophers which saw the whole world—nature—in a perpetual state of motion was reflecting in their philosophy in a generalised form the understanding of the primitive empirical science. The dialectics of Indian philosophers expressed in the three terms of birth, life and death (the trinity of *utpatti*, *sthiti* and *laya*), also saw the world of nature and society in a state of motion—which was an infinite repetition of the cycle of the three states. Indian dialectics was perhaps not so much a reflection of primitive empirical science as of the reproductive cycle of a more or less stagnant social system.

Dialectics of Hegel, being born in the age of modern science, reflects its achievements—the laws of motion of nature and universe discovered by it. Science in the time of Hegel was represented by Newton who discovered the laws of mechanical motion, the law of gravitation and explained the motion of the planets of the solar system. It was represented by Kant and Laplace who put forward a brilliant theory of the origin of the solar system. It was represented by the pioneers of geology, Hutton and Lyell, who discovered the laws of motion and formation of the earth's surface. It was represented by Diderot and Lamarck who laid the foundation of the science of the evolution of life, which was later to be developed by Darwin in his *Origin of the Species and Evolution of Man*.

This contemporary science had furnished Hegel with the factual data of the scientific laws of motion of nature out of which he discovered his laws of dialectics. He codified and

systematised these laws and attributed them to the 'idea'—to the 'world spirit'. The rational kernel of Hegel's dialectics consisted in this that it was the codified generalisation of the actual laws of motion of material universe discovered by science. It was wrapped up in the shell of idealism.

Marx rejected the idealism of Hegel and replaced it by materialism. In this he was following Feuerbach and others. But Feuerbach rejected the dialectics of Hegel, while Marx sought to extract its 'rational kernel'. So what Marx did was not just a materialist reversal of Hegelian dialectics. The dialectical laws and categories which Hegel attributed to the spirit were not just taken over by Marx as the dialectical laws and categories of nature and society.

Marx did not take over the Hegelian dialectics, its laws and categories as an *a priori* scheme in which the laws of nature and society must fit in.

On the other hand, by going over from the idealism to materialism, from speculation to science, and by extracting the rational kernel of Hegel's dialectics, Marx was able to evolve a *dialectical method* which like the valid method of science seeks the internal and necessary relations between phenomena and discovers their laws of motion.

Roger Garaudy has very aptly described this reversal—this putting Hegelian dialectics on its feet by Marx:

'For Marx, the materialist reversal of Hegelian philosophy and the transition from speculation to science enabled him to work out a dialectical method—related to the valid method of science—which seeks the internal and necessary relations between phenomena.'

In Marx's hand, *dialectics* became the most general laws of nature and society, known more and more accurately through incessant practice, research and verification.

His method became the true method of science in its three-fold aspects:

- Discovering the *abstract* law of motion of a given system or phenomenon, itself a generalisation from the concrete (hypothesis);

- Using the same to understand, explain as well as prognosticate on the basis of the known mass of data;

- Putting the same to the supreme test of truth, viz. practice, i.e. using it to change, to revolutionise nature and society in the interest of man.

That is why Marx said about his philosophy and his methods: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.' That his philosophy, the philosophy of dialectical materialism, is not something standing above sciences, both natural and social, but firmly based upon them. It expresses the most general laws of motion of both. Being firmly based on practice it expresses the indissoluble unity of theory and practice. It is a weapon of cognition, a weapon of change.

Let me briefly sum up my general remarks on the evolution of Marx's thought.

Marx's developed thought comprising of its three inseparable components arose out of three major thought-currents of his time. It was both their continuation as well as their negation. Marx was able to do this because from the very beginning he identified himself with the cause of the revolutionary class that was emerging, the proletariat, and its class struggles. As Marx said in his *German Ideology*, 'The existence of revolutionary ideas in a particular period presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class.' Thus Marx's thought is truly characterised as the revolutionary world-outlook of the proletariat.

Similarly, in its evolution Marx's thought developed from speculative philosophical communism to proletarian scientific communism under the impact of and identification with contemporary struggles of the proletariat. Marx very early recognised the historic role of the proletariat and its class struggle in the revolutionary transformation of society—creation of a really humane society. Marx was not degrading philosophy to the politics of the working class but on the other hand evolving out of the latter a new and higher philosophy. To quote Marx's words of the early days: 'As philosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat so the proletariat finds its spiritual

weapon in philosophy... Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat. The proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality.'

By rejecting the idealism of Hegel and Kant and by replacing it by materialism, by putting the dialectics of Hegel on its feet, Marx achieved a revolution in philosophy. This meant two things: Marx evolved a materialism which was distinct and higher than the contemporary materialism, which was mechanistic or vulgar. Marx's philosophical materialism derived its strength from the spirit and the achievements of modern natural and social sciences which were evolving then and were able to enrich them, in turn to be enriched by them. Secondly, extracting the rational kernel of Hegelian dialectics Marx developed the dialectical method which was at once scientific and revolutionary.

The two together make up the philosophy of dialectical materialism, as we call it today, the mighty weapon of the working class to effect its own liberation together with the liberation of all other exploited classes and thus advance to a really human society.

It is the evolution of this thought, the perfection of this weapon, that enabled Marx to make three great discoveries which have laid the foundations of three great sciences. The discovery of historical materialism laid the foundation of scientific sociology, of scientific history of social formations, of man's culture, etc. The discovery of the theory of surplus value laid the foundation of scientific political economy. This is not only the political economy of capitalist society, the laws of its rise, growth and its downfall, but also gives the political economy of the precapitalist formations as also shrewd prognostication and guidelines for the political economy of socialism and communism. His third discovery is the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which gives us the political science of social revolution and of its strategy and tactics. Engels ranked these discoveries, especially the first two, together with the greatest scientific discoveries of their age, viz. the Darwin's theory of the evolution of species and the principle of the conservation of energy.

Marx has nowhere written a single comprehensive work expounding his philosophy of dialectical materialism and his dialectical method. But Marx spent all his life of suffering and painstaking labour in perfecting this mighty weapon in the course of discharging two giant tasks, which stand as monuments to his creative genius as a great scientist and a great revolutionary. These are his great three-volume work *Das Kapital* and his great revolutionary organising work in connection with the Communist League and later with the International Workingmen's Association (1864-70).

If one has to characterise the developed thought of Marx, the world outlook of the proletariat, in just two words, then it is scientific and revolutionary. I think Comrade Walter Ulbricht, in his memorable report delivered before the main scientific conference held in Berlin to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Karl Marx, has put it very well:

'Marx was and became a great scientist because he was simultaneously a revolutionary and he could become a revolutionary of world historic rank because he was a thorough scientist.'

III

Marx's remarkable effort to pose problems of India's ancient history, to try to solve them through his theory of historical materialism, his studies into the contemporary developments in India, his attempts to explain them in terms of the laws of scientific political economy, his prognostications about India's future social development and about the perspectives of its social revolution—when we go over all these things now, nearly a hundred years after they were written, one cannot but be convinced of the truth, strength and efficacy of his scientific and revolutionary theories.

It is hardly necessary to talk in general terms of the relevance of Marx's thought to India, though of course we have a great lot to do in making that relevance and validity applicable to our multifarious problems and above all to the problem of our social revolution in the present stage. It would be most useful

therefore if we briefly review how Marx himself sought to understand the social transformation that was taking place in India in his time and how he tried to interpret some of the peculiarities of our ancient and medieval history.

It was well known even before Marx that civilised society in its various stages arose after the disintegration of the prehistoric barbaric society, the primitive communist society, in which there was no private property, no classes and no state. This disintegration is followed by the emergence of the various stages of civilised society—the ancient society based on slavery, medieval society based on serfdom and the modern society of capitalism.

Marx's hypothesis of historical materialism gave for the first time a cogent scientific explanation of this evolution of social formations in terms of the mode of production—the productive forces and the production relations of men engaged in the process, which characterises each social formation. The formula of this transformation from one social formation into another is well known. It is also known how the ideas, the political and social institutions of each social formation are in general determined by the particular mode of material production.

To put it in the words of Marx:

'All historical struggles—whether in religious, philosophical or ideological sphere—are in fact more or less class expressions of the struggles of the social classes and their existence and thus the collision of these classes is in turn determined by the degree of development of their economic positions, by the mode and manner of their production and exchange.'

This brilliant hypothesis, which Engels rightly compared with Darwin's theory of origin of species, has been fully confirmed by the work of the two masters and by subsequent work. A number of Marxist scholars, including Dr Kosambi, have successfully applied this principle to solve many problems of Indian history, though a great deal remains to be done.

This principle—no longer an hypothesis—which made sociology into a science, enables us not only to analyse and understand social history but also to make it to change society. Of course, like every other science, historical materialism does not give us

a ready-made scheme for explaining social history of different countries, for solving problems of revolutionary struggle and ideology of different periods. Existence of a correct theory does not obviate the necessity of the hard labour of sifting a vast mass of facts and experience; but without the guidance of a correct theory the intelligent sifting of data and experience is not possible. Such is the unity of theory and practice in Marxism as in all sciences. Every theory has to be again and again tested by the mass of evergrowing data and perfected.

Such was the scientific spirit of Karl Marx. For instance Marx does not seem to have made a rigid scheme of the precapitalist social formations of slavery and feudalism following the disintegration of the primitive communist society in that unalterable order as is generally presented in our Marxist textbooks.

It is now established that Marx spoke of an Asiatic mode of production as a variant of social formation emerging out of the disintegration of primitive communist society which he observed in the past history of many Asian and European countries. What attracted Marx in these social formations emerging out of primitive communist society, with development of agriculture as the main base of production, was the absence of private property in land.

The village commune which was the base of this social formation in India and other countries had selfsufficient economy—there was indissoluble bond between agriculture and hand industry. It was a closed unit of production where land was held in common, production was not for market but for use through exchange. The surplus product of the commune went to the despotic monarchical state at the top which ruled over a large number of such communes. But the state performed the public functions of maintaining irrigation and other public works necessary to reproduce the conditions of production.

Marx did not idealise this social formation or the village commune. It was a class society though perhaps a less developed one. There was no slavery in it of the Greek or Roman type as the main form of production relation. But there was a rigid caste system—and what Marx called the 'idiocy of village life'.

But it had one characteristic feature. The vast bulk of the production of this formation was in the village communes where it was for use. Urban handicraft industry was in the main for the needs of the army, luxury goods for the ruling class—though there was comparably little scope for its rapid development. Whatever political storms took place in the upper echelons of this formation—dynasties came and went—the village commune remained. Marx saw in this peculiarity of this social formation the relative long stagnancy of ancient civilisations such as those of India, China, etc.

I have given you a very inadequate, crude and abstract description of the Asiatic mode of production as used by Marx to explain some of the features of ancient and medieval Indian history. My point is to pose a problem, not to expound it. Some time back there was a tendency to dismiss this as a distinct social formation. It was sought to be equated to a form of Asiatic feudalism in the endeavour to restore the unalterable scheme mentioned above. But after Marx's manuscript on the 'precapitalist formation' has become available in English there has been a lot of discussion on this subject.

Marx is not trying to fit the reality into a set scheme but is using his scientific method to unravel the complex reality. This poser of an Asiatic mode of production as a distinct social formation serves to explain some of the peculiarities of ancient and medieval social history of India, though of course many problems remain unsolved.

We need not take everything that Marx wrote literally and make a rigid scheme of an unrelieved stagnation of India's long history. Fact remains that there was slavery—though not of the Greek and Roman type as the main form of production. Village commune seems to have been the basis of civilised society in India after it emerged from barbarism—and through several centuries—though in varying and evolving forms. Extremely bitter religious struggles have taken place in which oppressed varnas and castes rise against exploitation and oppression. Later emerges a feudalism of a type. Indian Marxist scholars differ as to the date when this takes place. There is a certain development of urban industry, trade and

navigation, still later emergence of manufactories mostly state-owned.

The long and varied panorama of our ancient and medieval history stretching from the pre-Vedic (?) days of Mohenjodaro to the advent of the British is too complex to be fitted into the traditional scheme characteristic of European development. This idea of Marx may prove useful for future Marxist historians and research workers in working out a scientific periodisation of our history, in unravelling the role of varnas and castes in social transformations, in understanding the meaning of the various religious struggles in the same.

Marx's studies in contemporary Indian developments date from 1853-59. This was about the period when Marx was engaged in working out the groundwork of the whole system of political economy of capital based on his second great discovery—the theory of surplus value.

In a way his interest in India at that time was casual. He was contracted to send weekly or fortnightly articles to a liberal American daily, *New York Herald Tribune*, which was then willing to print exposures of British colonial policy and capitalism.

In another way his interest was deeply theoretical. British capitalism was desperately in search of markets to tide over its periodic crises of overproduction. Loot from India had enabled the British conquerors to finance the Industrial Revolution and the giant capitalist industry was seeking markets. Would they get it to tide over the crisis and thus delay the maturing revolution in Britain?—that was one of his theoretical interests. I am referring to his articles on the East India Company and 'The Future Results of British Rule in India'. You are struck by the penetrating sweep of his analysis, by the accuracy of his prognostications.

Three things stand out in this analysis:

(1) British conquest of India was qualitatively different from all former conquests which affected only the top ruling layers of India, leaving its groundwork of village communes intact, in fact they built their empires on the same. The British conquerors who represented the ruling and exploiting class of a different

social system than the former conquerors of India acted quite differently. They broke up the village communes. They transformed India's land system to serve the needs of their colonial policy, eventually to get cheap raw material for their industry. They opened up markets for the same by brutally destroying India's indigenous hand industry. They began building up communications. They set in motion a veritable social upheaval—sowed the seeds of a new society in India as Marx called it—though in doing so they were actuated by the most sordid motives.

(2) At that time in India the first few miles of railway were being laid—from Bombay to Thana. That was in 1853. Marx forecast the inevitable emergence of some modern industry in India, the emergence of new classes.

(3) Most important of all he made the now well-known brilliant prophesy:

'The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindoos themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether. At all events, we may safely expect to see, at a more or less remote period, the regeneration of that great and interesting country, whose gentle natives are, to use the expression of Prince Saltykov, even in the most inferior classes, "more subtle and adroit than the Italians", whose submission even is counterbalanced by a certain calm nobility, who, notwithstanding their natural languor, have astonished the British officers by their bravery, whose country has been the source of languages, our religions, and who represent the type of the ancient German in the Jat and the type of the ancient Greek in the Brahmin.'

What striking knowledge of the people of India, what faith in their future destiny!

That the theses of these early articles of Marx on India have been confirmed by what happened in the next hundred years, that they turned to be a reliable guide to the study of

subsequent development of capitalism in India and to the basic contradictions of British colonial rule and its solution by the national liberation struggle—all this is one of the best proofs of the validity of the scientific political economy formulated by Marx.

It is no wonder that the analysis in these articles became the starting point of a small booklet *Modern India* written by Rajani Palme Dutt in 1926 and later of his bigger book *India Today* (1940 and 1946)—which inspired and reared a whole generation of early Marxists.

Marx not only predicted the emergence of the national liberation struggle which was to rise much later and defined its goal, but he also studied with great interest and enthusiasm the contemporary precursor of that struggle—India's First War of Independence of 1857-59, which the British historians labelled as the 'Indian mutiny'.

Again Marx's interest in studying the fortunes of the Indian rebels was theoretical. There was again the economic crisis in Britain and Europe—setting the pace of the revolution there. Will the Indian rebels succeed, or will the British capitalists succeed in crushing them, and thus retain the growing vast market of India and delaying the revolution?—that was Marx's interest.

Marx's attitude towards the rebels was intensely partisan. How keenly he followed the developments, how eagerly he waited for the despatches from India, which came then round the Cape of Good Hope by sea mail. All this we know from the correspondence. What a brilliant reply he gave to the contemporary British colonialist historians and journalists, who railed at the atrocities by the rebels. Marx countered the propaganda by exposing the British atrocities from their own writings.

Writing to Engels in those days (1853-59) Marx has somewhere said that his knowledge of India was inadequate. In fact after finishing his monumental work on capital, i.e. after the publication of the first volume of *Das Kapital* in 1867—by which time the other two volumes were already in rough manuscript—Marx once again turned to studies on India. This is seen from

his chronological notes on Indian history made in the late sixties. Perhaps he was not able to complete his studies.

Though Marx talks of the stagnancy of India's traditional society being broken up by the British conquest, of the social upheaval brought about by them sowing the seeds of a new society, etc., this should not be taken to mean that India could not have come to modern development and industrialisation but for the British intervention and rule. This was not Marx's meaning; nor have later research workers, both Indian and foreign Marxists, taken it in that sense. India in the days of later Moghul rule was perhaps economically ripe for such a development. British intervention in a way delayed and distorted the process, leaving behind the stupendous ugly legacy of its colonial rule which our unfinished liberation revolution did not fully clear and with which we are still grappling.

In fact Marx rated very highly the creative and regenerative forces latent in India. This is clear from some references in the chronological notes and from subsequent references. In this the broadminded internationalism and humanism of Marx and in fact of Marxism stands in sharp contrast to the narrowminded chauvinism of western bourgeois colonial scholars.

In support of this I will read out to you two quotations. The first one is from Marx in a letter to Danielson in 1881.

'In *India* serious complication, if not a general outbreak, is in store for the British government. What the English take from them annually in the form of rent, dividends for railways useless to the Hindus; pensions for military and civil servicemen, for Afghanistan and other wars, etc., etc. —what they take from them *without any equivalent and quite apart* from what they appropriate to themselves annually *within* India—speaking only of the *value of the commodities* the Indians have gratuitously and annually to send over to England—it amounts to *more than the total sum of income of the 60 millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India!* This is a bleeding process with a vengeance! The famine years are pressing each other and *in dimensions* till now not yet suspected in Europe.'

Marx is exposing in sharp and clear words the British colonial loot of India and its consequences about which Dadabhoy Naoroji and R. C. Dutt were to write later. Marx also senses the 'brewings' which were the precursors of the modern national liberation movement: 'There is an actual conspiracy going on wherein Hindus and Musalmans cooperate. British government is aware that something is "brewing".'

The second is from Engels's letter to Kautsky written in 1882. Engels expresses his disappointment with the attitude which the contemporary British working-class movement is taking towards British colonial policy. He describes it the same as that of the bourgeoisie! But he is hopeful about the developments in countries like India, Algeria and Egypt which are simply subjugated by the colonialists. About India he says:

'India will perhaps, indeed very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of selfemancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it would have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions.'

He is already posing the question as when independent India would arrive at a socialist organisation though he does not give any answer to the same:

'But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we today can advance only rather idle hypotheses.'

Implicit in this is the poser: must India go through capitalism in order to come to socialism? The answer could not be given then. It was given 38 years later, after the victory of the first socialist revolution in the world, in 1920, by Lenin in the colonial theses of the Second Congress of the Communist International.

IV

I have given you a cursory review, highlighting some of the salient features of the work of Karl Marx on India—on the

problems of its ancient history and contemporary developments and on the problem of India's future socialist transformation. I have also referred to the early work of Rajani Palme Dutt which took Marx's work as its starting point. I must also refer here to the earlier work of M. N. Roy, *India in Transition*, and Comrade Dange's *Gandhi versus Lenin* (1922 and 1921 respectively). In the field of ancient and medieval Indian history, we have first Comrade Dange's work: *India—From Primitive Communism to Slavery*, and the very scholarly and extensive work of Prof D. D. Kosambi. It would be no exaggeration to say that Prof Kosambi, more than any one else except Comrade Dange, has done a great work in popularising the method of historical materialism of Marx among Indian Marxist scholars and research workers.

I am not attempting to make a review of the Marxist research work on Indian problems done by Indian and foreign scholars. I am not adequately equipped for it. I sometimes think that a bibliography of such work, section by section, should be made before we attempt a review. This will be useful for research workers. The only point I want to make here is that work, though quite considerable, falls short of the requirements of the day.

But the fact remains that there are at present in India quite a number of Marxists who are either with the party or are non-party or are with other parties committed to scientific socialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin. What is needed and that too urgently is to achieve coordination of all their work. What is needed is to achieve cooperation and collective work among the Marxists working separately on different sections, so that the volume of the work can be increased and above all its quality improved.

This is not just planning academic work. No. It is far more planning and organising a united front of struggle on the ideological and theoretical sector, struggle against the western neo-colonialist writers, against those who echo their ideas in India—like the ideologues of Swatantra, Jana Sangh and reactionary rightwing Congress, against all antisocialist trends who come forward in various ways, open or hidden, as apologists of capi-

talism and capitalist development in India. It is a coming together of all committed to scientific socialism, who are contributing in this field—in the front of ideological struggle against reaction, against antisocialist, anticommunist trends. In this sense such a coordination is important.

How is this possible, one may rightly ask, when those who generally and honestly stand by the scientific socialism of Marx-Engels-Lenin are divided in their loyalty to so many parties and groups and some are nonparty? Of course, this is difficult, especially in view of sharp political conflicts among these parties and groups. But these parties and groups also work together in common united fronts and even UF governments. I think given the will, given a strictly scientific approach and a single-minded commitment to the cause of socialist revolution in India, this should not be impossible. They can join in forums, seminars, symposiums and even in bringing out joint publications and journals provided the different views are dispassionately discussed, issues are sharply posed but without rancour or venom, not on the basis of just arguments and quotations but on the basis of scientifically-guided study of new facts and mass of data.

I am not making any concrete proposals. They will evolve in the process of consultations here as well as elsewhere in similar gatherings. I only suggest that if a number of like-minded Marxists, party as well as nonparty men, get together and begin coordinating their efforts and develop collective work and keep a nonsectarian approach towards those who have not joined, then I think a beginning can be made. If such a beginning is made and pursued with patience and determination then they can eventually result in setting up an All-India Institute of Scientific Socialism with live and functioning branches in every state. These, both at the all-India and state levels, will be centres coordinating research and application of Marxism-Leninism to the problems of India in different fields, as centres for propagating militant thought and ideology of scientific socialism among the broad masses in the respective national languages and mother tongues.

The two tasks—popularising the principles and ideals of

scientific socialism and applying them to solve the problems of India in different fields—are today indissolubly linked together. The days and the stage of general popularisation of ideas and principles of socialism and communism are over. If the class base of the broad democratic fronts we are building for the great struggle ahead has to be strengthened, it should be made fully class-conscious and firmly committed to the cause of socialist revolution. This class base, this core, consisting of workers, agricultural labourers, working peasants and militant democratic intelligentsia, must be fully armed with an ideology which is at once revolutionary and scientific, which will enable it to resist and fight back all manner of reactionary trends of communalism, casteism, narrow parochialism and chauvinism, that seek to undermine its healthy anti-imperialist, antifeudal consciousness and its consciousness of class solidarity and class unity.

This is not just a question of popularising the principles of scientific socialism, nor of just applying these principles to solve problems of India in the various fields. It is a creative combination of the two, to create, to shape the ideology of modern India—of that India which is determined to put an end to the ugly legacy of the colonial and feudal past and to the evil excrescences of the present capitalist development—which is determined to complete our national democratic revolution left unfinished in 1947 and to advance to the socialist regeneration of India.

What is the relation of this ideology of modern emergent India to the ideology of modern India which has been evolving since the days of Ram Mohan Roy, Sir Syed Ahmed and Vivekananda to the days of Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru? I will not go into the question which needs to be posed in detailed study and answered—a task of urgent importance.

In the course of the development of this ideology, as is well known, a conflict arose. It was a conflict between those who took a seemingly scientific and rational approach to problems of social development but were loyal to powers that be and those who took up the militant fight against imperialism but took revivalist and a negative approach to social reform. This was the reflection of the conflict in the early days of our national

movement—the conflict between the moderates and the extremists. It was the reflection of the interests of the two wings of the evolving Indian bourgeoisie. A seeming solution of the contradiction was achieved with the maturing of the Indian national bourgeoisie and with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi at the head of the mass national movement, recognised by the former as its leader. But the Gandhian solution represented the dual role of the national bourgeois leadership in that phase of the struggle for social transformation. Its essence was fight as well as compromise with the forces of imperialism and feudalism in the quest for bourgeois power.

Nehru was wedded to modern scientific approach and intellectually committed to certain extent to scientific socialism. But his practical and pragmatic compromises with Gandhi both in the days before and after independence made him, in spite of all this, nothing more than a leftwing supporter of Gandhi.

On the communists and scientific socialists with their base among the working class, working peasants, agricultural workers and revolutionary democratic intelligentsia devolved the task of creating and spreading the ideology of modern India. The task has lagged behind because of the weaknesses, mistakes and shortcomings of the communist movement in India.

But all the same it is the communists, Marxists and scientific socialists who have to solve the task. It is they who have to solve the decades-old contradictions of which I spoke, negate the double-faced compromising ideology of the national bourgeoisie and create the ideology of modern India which is at once revolutionary and scientific in the true spirit of Marx. This ideology will carry forward all that is healthy and progressive and which emerged in the course of our modern national evolution, while negating all that is old, reactionary and moribund.

I do not know whether I have made myself clear in view of the terse and abstract way I have spoken. The point I want to make is that it is of the urgent importance that communists, Marxists and scientific socialists find their way to coordinate their work on the ideological front in performance of the two tasks I have mentioned. Offensive of reaction to disrupt the class

solidarity and unity of the toiling and democratic masses demands of us that we pool our efforts together in this field.

The theory, practice and ideology of scientific socialism and communism emerged and grew in strength and stature, embracing ever growing mass of mankind in its fold in bitter struggle with bourgeois reactionary ideologists, in struggle in its own ranks against revisionism, which sought to dilute and negate its revolutionary spirit, and in action against dogmatism which sought to make it a rigid system incapable of creative growth.

Never before was there an integrated social philosophy unifying such a vast mass of mankind and organising them in a noble endeavour.

This we say despite the fact that there have been mistakes and temporary setbacks, despite the grievous division in the ranks of world communism, despite the fact that two-thirds of the world is yet under the rule of capitalism. . . Why? Because in the world as a whole, the greatest single mass of humanity is grouped and united around the ideology and system of socialism and communism, because the socialist system and all anti-imperialist forces have become a decisive force.

History has confirmed the truth of Marxism. Millions of working people are today using the teaching to change the world and remould it in a more humane way. Under the banner of Marxism, a renovation of man's living conditions is taking place with a sweep, tempo and social depth never known before. Men are coming forward in this process as conscious creators of their own social relations.

The world and mankind are facing today the challenge of scientific technological revolution. The bulk of the forces of this revolution such as atomic power, resources arising out of new advances in chemistry, biology and cybernetics are in the grip of world's monopolists, who are using them to stoke the fires of war for new neocolonialist aggressions as in Vietnam, in West Asia to maintain the gaping inequalities between the developed and underdeveloped nations. Thanks to the emergence of the socialist system, a section of the forces of this scientific and technological advance are in the hands of the working-class states who together represent a formidable obstruction to

imperialist aggression, a bulwark of peace, a powerful help and inspiration to forces fighting for national liberation and socialism in the third world and in the capitalist countries. Which way will the balance tilt? Will the forces of world monopolists and neocolonialists prevail in keeping their hand on the trigger of these mightly resources and continue to blackmail mankind with the threat of war, of neocolonialist aggression, condemning Vietnamese with poverty and degradation? Or, will the two other sectors of the world revolutionary process—the working-class movement in the capitalist countries and the movement of the peoples fighting for their national liberation and for consolidation of their independence—join hands with the socialist system to speed up the world revolution and to realise the dream of Karl Marx on a world plane?

Karl Marx was the first to see that the development of modern productive forces of science and technology and their application to industry and agriculture have created conditions for transforming socialism from a utopia into a science and for realising the same.

With one-third of the world where this has been already realised as our support, the working people are in a position to realise it both nationally and internationally.

On this 150th birth anniversary of the founder of scientific socialism let us once again renew our pledge to build a militant national democratic front, uniting the forces of the working people with those revolutionary democrats prepared to join hands in completing the anti-imperialist, antifeudal revolution, to overthrow the rule of the monopolies, to create a state power which would reverse the present disastrous course of capitalist development and create conditions for building socialism.

V

Karl Marx was a great, noble and humane character in private and public life.

His greatness as man, the strength of his character were the outcome of his all-embracing education. He was fully conversant with the great treasures of world literature and

sciences. He knew his Greek and Latin classics as well as contemporary European masters of letters and science. He had a surprisingly wide knowledge of the orient and of Indology that he quotes Manu.

It was deep insight into the course of history and his passion for mastering the latest achievements of science that enabled him to show mankind the path of liberation.

As a scholar and revolutionary fighter he had always to live in want and suffering—Engels said about him that he got for the manuscript of his historic work even less than what a poorly-paid wage labourer got as his wages.

Scientific achievement and practical revolutionary struggle were combined in one whole in the life and work of Karl Marx. He laboured and suffered to build a working-class movement in Germany and other countries. *Communist Manifesto* was the programme of the first Communist Party in the world.

A terror to the Prussian monarchy and the reactionary German bourgeoisie—persecuted and hounded out by them, he never wavered. He fought for a united democratic republican German state as against junker, bourgeois German state of his time and expressed its reactionary character. He loved the German working class, was a burning patriot.

He truly believed that the German working class in alliance with the peasantry and all the progressive forces was alone capable of constituting the German nation as free, democratic, socialist and peace-loving state. His dream is now realised in a part of his homeland and will be achieved in the whole of it in the coming period.

He founded the First International in September 1864. He fought against both right and left deviations; created the precursor of the international socialist movement and later of international communist and workers' movement of our days. He set us a model for fighting for the international unity of the working class.

The creation of the world outlook of the working class was the joint work of Marx and Engels. Separately and independently they came to the same conclusions that led to great

discoveries. Their close collaboration accelerated the creation of scientific socialism. Lenin said this of their legendary and historic friendship.

'In legends of antiquity there are many a touching examples of friendship. The European proletariat can say with pride that its science was created by two scholars and fighters whose relationship as friends puts into shade the most touching legends of old about human friendship.'

He was a real comrade-in-arms of the first band of communists, a teacher and helper.

He was a loving husband of that great and gentle woman, Jenny Marx, who sacrificed her all for the cause of socialism.

He bore with affection and fortitude the cares of rearing a large family under conditions of want and suffering.

The nobility, character and humaneness displayed by this great revolutionary should be a model for us all young and old militant workers who are labouring for the victory of the banner of revolution he unfurled.

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