MARXISM TO-DAY

ROBERT CONQUEST

NA BOOKS

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY SIMLA

Abdul Majed Khan.
25. 11. '65

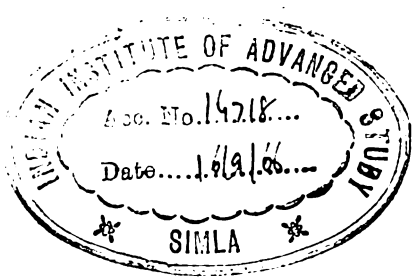
MARXISM TO-DAY

MARXISM TO-DAY

Robert Conquest

NATIONAL ACADEMY
DELHI-6

iginally published by
Ampersand Ltd.,
199, Piccadilly, London, W-1.



Price : Rupee one and fifty paise

First Indian Edition
Printed for
NATIONAL ACADEMY
9, Ansari Market, Daryaganj, Delhi-6.
at Naya Hindustan Press, Delhi-6.

(Published 1965.)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

THIS short account of Marxism and its present-day relevance is not put forward as a complete examination and history of the complicated and variously interpreted teachings to which the word Marxism is applied. It is, rather, a presentation for serious but not professional students from London to Lagos, from Caracas to Calcutta, of the essentials of Marx's thought and of the ways in which it is currently applied.

Huge tomes, many of them comprehensible only to those who have made a lifetime speciality of studying the subject, have been written about Marxism. Even in them there is often an inclination to see Marxism as a single and coherent doctrine. It is seldom that consideration is given to the various rather different elements of thought to be found in Marx, and the manner in which these have been selected and exaggerated by some of his successors at the expense of other sides of his doctrine.

By an accident of history, we are inclined to regard Marxism as meaning an official doctrine held by various governments, which is, in reality, a development of one section only of Marxist political thought, and which contradicts much of what Marx himself said. For example, it would scarcely be guessed that Marx was always a firm proponent of freedom of the press in all circumstances.

Moreover, even the "official" versions now held by the different States and parties within that movement

contradict one another in important ways. Marxist political theory claims to be scientific. But these divisions show that different proponents draw different conclusions from the same facts, by what is supposed to be scientific method. This is a peculiar circumstance. And we need to examine the sense, if any, in which Marxist thought can really be regarded as being on a level of scientific theory proper.

Another curious result of this State Marxism is that within the international Communist movement the final authority on the orthodoxy of the teaching has been not the political philosophers but the Central Committees of political parties. Naturally, all serious theoreticians of Marxism have sooner or later found themselves in disagreement with the party authorities, and their views have been suppressed. This has led to a great deterioration of the standard of thought, as Marx himself implies it must. The man most skilled at attaining power is not necessarily the soundest thinker. And when essential argument is prevented, thought tends to die out. As a result, many short books on Marxism are no more than "orthodox" Marxist-Leninist handouts, propaganda popularization.

Marxism contains many important and interesting insights. And though "official" Marxism has been thrown into enmity, in principle, with all other civilized thinking, the actual teachings of Marx are in many ways bound up with the other traditions of democratic thought. Relaxations of pressure from the State and party machines in officially Marxist countries have always led to a revival of this independent, libertarian and open-minded element in Marxism. Such developments, releasing such countries

from dead-end dogmatism, have a progressive significance.

For this and other reasons, the elements of Marxism should be mastered and critically examined by all those interested in politics today. It is hoped that this brief study will be helpful to that end.

Robert Conquest

Tunis, May 1964

INTRODUCTION

A CENTURY ago the German theorist Karl Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels developed a way of looking at the universe, and in particular at human society, which has had enormous influence on the minds of their successors.

"Marxism", however, was not a clear-cut teaching which could only be interpreted in a single way. The stream of Marxist thought has produced a number of variant interpretations.

One of these is based on the ideas of the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. This development of the original Marxist notions has attracted the greatest attention, because it became the official creed of a party which had come to power in a great State. When people nowadays speak of Marxism, they often mean this particular version of it—"Marxism-Leninism". But in its turn "Marxism-Leninism" was subjected to various interpretations. Heresies in Russia were crushed not by argument but by main force. When Communist Parties the Russians could not control came to power elsewhere, they too developed heresies. So Marxism today means a broad stream of ideas, from the Democratic Socialist outlook of certain of the "Marxist" Socialist Parties in the West, and the idea of revisionist "rightist" or democratic Communism which has sprung up among intellectuals in the Communist *bloc*, through the more dogmatic Marxism of the mild dictatorship of Tito and Gomulka, the conservative totalitarianism of Russia, and the radical, aggres-

sive tyranny of China. Each claims to represent the essence of true Marxism.

Let us then first of all go back to the origins and development of that powerful way of thinking.

Marx describes his system as arising from three sources—the philosophy of the German Hegel, the economics of Ricardo and other British economists, and the social theories of French Socialists like St Simon. He also acknowledged that his historical views were based on French historians of the early 19th century who had developed the theory of economic class interest as a dominant political motive. It will be seen that the three strands in Marx's thinking—philosophical, historico-political, and economic—are not automatically and necessarily related.

Hegelian philosophy sees the world as a process containing lesser, interacting processes ; human history forms one of these. In all the processes of the universe the motive force, in Hegel's view, is the struggle between "contradictory" elements. He saw history in terms of a struggle between ideas. The young Marx was already involved in the political struggle for democracy against the autocratic States of the Europe of the first half of the 19th century. He related this struggle to the philosophical "struggle" he had absorbed from Hegel. But while Hegel's political interests were largely academic (and reactionary) Marx was a true political enthusiast. And in his French mentors he found a substitute for Hegel's conflict of ideas as the motive force of history; a conflict of groups of men with different interests.

The Hegelian philosophy is practically dead. It is extremely scholastic and the objections to it are very great. But its whole method and tone survives in acade-

mic Marxism, much to its detriment.

The economic theories which Marx developed from Ricardo and others are also wholly obsolete. Indeed, it has been said that the whole of Marx's laborious economic work is little more than an attempt to "prove" what is essentially a moral point—that the "value" of any commodity depends upon the labour put into it. For even if we accept this simply as it stands, it can readily be seen that the world "value" in this context has no useful economic meaning. It has never been shown as relevant either to the price or even to the social utility of the commodity in question, though Marx tried to make such a relation.

Marx's *historical* theory, on the other hand, has been extremely fruitful.

MARX'S PHILOSOPHY

IT is a curious fact that Marx has nowhere written a book expounding his philosophy. Instead we have scattered pages here and there in his works, the controversy his colleague Engels had with a minor German thinker—*Anti-Duehring*, and a rather slapdash collection of papers by Engels on the supposed confirmation given by science to the principles of the dialectic—*Dialectics and Nature*.

Marxism had many advantages over the earlier philosophies. And it still has advantages when presented to people who have not studied, even briefly, the more modern developments. The average educated man of goodwill and of good sense who is not a professional philosopher has probably started out with a view of the universe not very consciously or articulately held, not necessarily of great internal consistency, and based on accepted habits of mind—most often of a religious or partly religious nature. The sceptical go on from this to a stage when they question and reject the propositions of their childhood, but again replace them not with any deeply thought out system of ideas, but with a general scientific agnosticism. This is still thought of, to an extent which they do not realize, in terms of their old habitual and uncritical vocabulary.

There are few true philosophies which present themselves in a form readily available and acceptable to the ordinary educated man. These are seldom the philosophies of philosophers so much as the philosophies accepted by

organisations—parties or churches—which have the means of making great impacts, or large claims, on their members and converts.

Among these, Marxism has several advantages. First, it considers itself to be "scientific", and at any rate has much regard for scientific evidence and prestige. Secondly, it arose later than most of the established schools, and at a time when both the unity of the universe and its non-static character were becoming increasingly recognised: the dialectic, basically, is a rather primitive device for seeing the universe as a process rather than as an unchanging state.

The Marxist philosophy, or world view—"dialectical materialism"—can be considered in two aspects, as its title implies.

In the first place it is "materialist". Philosophical controversy for a century or so up to Marx's time had centred largely on a question now not much dealt with by professional philosophers—whether the material universe or some metaphysical "idea" was basic. Since all the more sophisticated idealist philosophers took fully into account the observed behaviour of the universe as we sense it, the question ceased to be one that could be decided by reference to any evidence, and shrivelled up into a rather minor matter of definitions. Nowadays, whether or not philosophers hold to some transcendental being or force behind the universal process, they would almost all admit the central Marxian thesis that as far as humanity is concerned intelligence and thought arose as in some sense a product of the physical evolution, and that in this sense at least matter has a primacy.

Secondly, Marxism is "dialectical," which means that it deals with the "contradictions" which motivate the universe.

The dialectic is summed up by Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach* in which he gives its chief "laws" as :

1. The identity (or unity) of contradictories (or opposites).
2. The law of the negation of the negation. (Sometimes called the "law of the transformation of contradictions into each other.")
3. The transition of quantity into quality and vice versa.

And although written out flatly the conditions of the dialectic are easy to criticise, yet in a sense this is not the only point. Just as the differential calculus is a device for representing constant change by a mathematical symbolism which necessarily remains static itself, so the dialectic may be thought of as an attempt to provide forms of words—themselves, of course, static—which taken together enable a mobile process to be envisaged. The dialectic method, at its best, is not so much a mechanical application to events of the various phrases about "contradiction" so much as the developing of a habit of looking at events with all the formulae in mind, getting a grasp of the process-in-the-round from all the various standpoints the formulae may be thought of as representing.

It can certainly be said that some Marxist writers have mastered this art in a way which is to their benefit, but there are a number of criticisms to be made.

In the first place the habit of looking at phenomena as an interlocking flow of events is one which can be obtained by other means, and has now become entirely

usual in all serious circles. The habit now being easy to attain, all the old formulae should be dismissed as helpful crutches which can now be dispensed with.

Secondly, by far the most common reaction even among the most intelligent Marxists has been to attach a kind of mystic significance to the formulae themselves. The most "unscientific" side of Marxist philosophy lies precisely here. For example, the word "contradiction," which was appropriate in Hegel because *he* was thinking in terms of argument and ideas, is transferred directly to matter. It is said to be "objectively present in things and processes" and Engels says that it is an "actual force."

Many examples are given in the Marxist classics. For example, it is held that motion is "contradiction" because it only occurs if a body is at "one and the same moment both at one place and in another"—a variation of a paradox going back to the Greeks. But, of course, there is no "real" paradox or contradiction, only a verbal one : all that is shown is that certain *descriptions* of motion were contradictory or inconsistent, as indeed they were. But even towards the end of the last century it had become possible to describe motion perfectly consistently by means of mathematical functions.

Again "contradiction" is simply equated with "struggle". In fact it will be seen that all the formulae suffer from one basic fault. They are loose enough to be applicable one way or another to any sort of situation. But at the same time they do not enable any further knowledge of those situations to be acquired. There is no record of any sort that any study of these supposed "natural laws" has been of any benefit at all to science

or knowledge. In general, simply because the relation between the meaning of the words employed in the formulae has not been examined, they will almost always be found in any case to apply not to any actual process, but to certain ways of describing these processes. They are, in fact, about words, rather than things.

For example, a Marxist philosophical writer has given two examples of the "unity of opposites." In the first he says that the assertion "John Smith is a man" asserts the "identity" of an individual with man in general. The individual and the general are *described* as "opposites" in this context, and so the conditions are fulfilled. But the whole difficulty can be resolved by thinking briefly of what is meant in this sentence by the word "is" and the word "man." (The phrase means no more than "what John Smith has in common with many millions of other beings is that he is a male human.")

In the same way, he later asserts that we may say that a table "is hard or it would not support, and soft or it could not be cut." Once more, it is a verbal matter. Hard and soft in this context are simply abbreviated ways of saying "able to support things" and "cuttable"; there is no contradiction. And a similar process can be applied to any statement of the dialectic.

Similarly, the word "matter" has proved extremely confusing to the Marxists, who are inclined to give it a sort of sublime importance and to be suspicious of all those scientists and philosophers who tend to write of our knowledge of the universe simply in terms of the phenomena as they present themselves to us, without constantly asserting that there is some special substance behind them.

In fact, it may be diagnosed that although Marxism was an attempt by the old philosophy to bring the habits of our speech into some sort of conformity with the ways of the universe, it was yet itself hobbled by the unconscious habits of the European languages in which the theory was expressed. It saw the noun "matter" as in some way more "real" than a simple description of happening in verbal terms—the fallacy which through the Middle Ages produced the notion of "substance" behind and apart from all the observable qualities of a thing.

By not going behind words, the Marxists found themselves, like previous philosophers, unable to distinguish between phenomena and descriptions of phenomena, between words and things; and attributed an almost magical force to their own verbal constructions. For this they are not to blame. It was only in the 20th century that the hard and fruitful work of hundreds of highly-trained researchers gradually threw light on this field of "semantics."

For the most interesting development of the last two or three generations in philosophy has been the emergence of techniques for questioning the meaning of the words and propositions with which we describe the universe. This is a revolution which has made as much nonsense of Marxism as it has of the older and even more primitive philosophical thought.

HIS ECONOMICS

THE essence of Marxist economics consists of showing that the worker does not get a return in pay equal to the full "value" which his labour contributes to the product, since part of the profit is retained by the capitalist. This had been pointed out by all the great economists of the English school since Adam Smith. Marx's new point was to declare this retention of "surplus value" illegitimate. The novelty was, therefore, ethical and social rather than economic.

"Value" economics—both Marxist and pre-Marxist—was not very successful, and its influence on modern economic thought has long been extinct. In particular, it is very difficult to deduce any definite conclusions from it. Nevertheless Marx did come to some definite economic conclusions. For example, in the first volume of *Capital* he argues that since profit accrues solely from the surplus value extracted from labour, the rate of profit will depend upon the proportion of labour to fixed capital in the form of machinery and will therefore tend to fall as technological improvements lead to the employment of proportionately less labour. This was plainly untrue even at the time, and Marx himself finally noted the difficulty, but set it aside for later treatment which he never gave it.

A second "law" Marx deduced was that the number of capitalists would contract and, as a country advanced economically under capitalism, it would increasingly polarise into fewer and fewer capitalists and more and more proletarians. This too, fails completely as a

recognisable account of the real evolution of the West. And from it in turn Marx deduced his famous "law of increasing misery"—in that the more the capital invested and the greater the production the less will be the wages paid for labour. This is also false.

From such arguments and also on more general grounds, Marx deduced the basic economic definition of the *political* processes he foresaw. Increasing concentration socialises the economy. Centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. Thereupon Socialism, as the order best fitting the actual state of production, is brought in by the victorious working class which substitutes for the capitalist centralisers its own representatives.

In fact, nothing like this happened. In the countries which have had supposedly "Marxist" revolutions, these were *not* the product of overwhelming proletarianisation and extreme centralisation of industry. On the other hand the countries which have supposedly remained "capitalist" were precisely the ones which Marx already a hundred years ago had seen as approaching the economic conditions he regarded as certain to produce Socialism.

HIS VIEW OF HISTORY

ALTHOUGH it does not necessarily follow from his philosophical views as a matter of logic, in tone and attitude it seems natural that Marx takes the economic side of man's life as basic. And not in the sense that while urgent economic problems such as how to feed oneself are unsolved one cannot sit down and philosophise, but in a far more fundamental way. For he holds that in some sense all institutions, and all thought and philosophy, are a "superstructure" erected upon, and in the long run dependent upon their economic base—"upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence". Not only do all states and parties represent classes, but theories of history and of the universe are simply the ideas of a class and reflect its special position.

This notion has been of great importance in the history of Marxism. Marx himself excludes "the language of real life", that is everything that can be determined "with the precision of natural science" from these elements of class ideology. But Soviet political theories have not been so modest and even now Soviet biologists are being censured for remarking that there is no such thing as bourgeois biology, only biology.

Stated flatly, the notion that economics determines everything is painly a false one and Marx and Engels understood this. They made a number of reservations conceding that the "superstructure" could have its effect upon the "base", and that "the mode of production" only

determines a culture "basically" and in the last instance. And in practice they usually concede that to call an idea or art-form "bourgeois" is to say very little about it; that to criticise requires genuine argument. Again, this restriction has not been observed by present-day Communists who from this modest beginning have evolved such ideas as "Socialist realism", a concept no one has been able to define formally, but which means in practice no more than that the decisions of politicians are binding in the arts.

The basic economic trends manifest themselves in the "class struggle". The "contradiction" between an expanding economy and a rigid social structure gains expression as a struggle between the class interested in change and the class interested in keeping things as they are. The former is bound to win in the long run. Marx held, in a general way, that the class struggle had been the dominant factor and the centre of political movement since the end of the "primitive Communism" of prehistoric man.

It is certainly true that struggles between economic classes took place throughout recorded history. Yet it is straining the facts very much to interpret those of ancient or feudal times as the truly decisive elements of historical development. Engels almost admits this when he says that it is "*modern* history" in which "political struggles" are "class struggles"; and Lenin too mentions the 17th and 18th centuries as a period when the class struggle did *not* determine the course of political events.

Marx studied philosophy at university, and his philosophical views are well worked out, though they are not now very relevant. He mastered, on the whole, the then classical economics, but these too have lost their cogency—and in any case, his development of them is not of much

theoretical interest from the purely economic point of view. But even on his historical themes we must add that his knowledge of history was not very great, except that of Western Europe during the previous century or two, merging into the practical immediate politics of his own time.

Yet this is only to say that it is his theories of modern politics and of modern historical development that are truly living sections of his doctrine. And in these fields—by far the most important from a practical point of view—no one can deny that he was a brilliant and outstanding sociologist and political theorist. In fact, however much we find to criticise in his attempts to impose his system on all history, and on the entire universe, it is only fair to examine Marxism in its great practical application—as a theory of the history of our times—and to judge it on that basis.

Marx's philosophy of history is most concisely set out in his *Critique of Political Economy*. The main propositions are :

(i) "The conditions of production, taken as a whole, constitute the economic structure of society"—this is the material "basis on which a superstructure of laws and political institutions is raised and to which certain forms of political consciousness correspond."

(ii) "Arrived at a certain stage in their development, the material forces of production come into conflict with the existing conditions of production, or—this is but a juristic way of expressing the same fact—with the system of property under which they display their activity".

(iii) "From forces favouring development the conditions of production now turn into fetters on these forces".

(iv) "Then a period of social revolution sets in".

(v) "Owing to the alteration of the economic basis, the whole immense superstructure is, gradually or suddenly, subverted".

(vi) "In order to understand such a revolution, it is necessary to distinguish between the changes in the conditions of economic production, which are a material fact and can be observed and determined with the precision of natural science, on the one hand, and on the other, the legal, political, religious, artistic and philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out".

(vii) "No form of society can perish before all the forces of production which it is large enough to contain are developed, and at no time will outworn conditions be replaced by new higher conditions as long as the material necessities of their existence have not been hatched in the womb of the old Society itself".

(viii) "In bold outline, one may distinguish between Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Modern Capitalist forms of production, as being the progressive economic forms of Society".

(ix) "The present Capitalist conditions of production are the last antagonistic form of society....The productive forces, however, that are developing under the present system, are at the same time creating the material conditions which will make possible

the solution of this antagonism".

Marx never suggested that there were not other and lesser elements in the political and economic situation. But he regarded these as invariably and inevitably minor.

His analysis is one which obviously has much to be said for it. Our whole way of looking at society has been changed and enriched by his concepts. And there are certain countries at certain times to which his analysis applies almost without amendment, and others when the forces he saw play an important, if not decisive, part.

But, paradoxically enough, the areas in which class conflict is most apparent and most bitter are not those of classical capitalism. There are a number of States—in Europe, in the Middle East, in Latin America, and elsewhere—where the rich act quite consciously and selfishly, and without qualms about the effects on others in the country, to maintain their own property and interests. The selfishness and obviousness with which certain of the Sicilian, or the Iranian, or the Colombian economic possessors flaunt their status and possessions for the poorest to see, and openly claim subservience from all others simply on these grounds, are quite fantastic and inexplicable except on the view that they are *totally* possessed by the notion that their advantages are in the nature of things. This appears as the classical class situation of which Marx speaks.

On the other hand, it has seldom prevailed except in peripheral areas where society has reached a certain disintegration, or where the preceding "feudalism" was of a similarly irresponsible type.

Moreover, on Marx's view the most authentic capi-

talist ruling classes act with solidarity, and are prepared to sacrifice enough interest of their various members to maintain their rule as a whole. But it is common experience in the sort of areas we are referring to that the rich have been the first to switch all their assets to Switzerland and leave in a hurry rather than attempt to protect their interests, when threatened. In fact, they should not be regarded as typical but as superficial and decadent capitalists—and in fact not as usual capitalist classes at all, but as rentier-absentee shareholders in profit-making concerns rather than possessors and operators of those concerns.

In England, on which Marx based many of his generalisations, a purely "capitalist" theory arose at the beginning of the 19th century to give the then booming class of small factory owners its ideological justification. It was held that the mere operation of economic laws should not be interfered with, since they represented the true development of social life. That is, it was in a sense thought to be almost sinful to limit the hours of labour, to prevent exploitation of children, and so on. These theories had a strong influence in the absence of any other theories designed to cope with modern economic and social arrangements ; yet they did not prevail.

The traditions of earlier times, deeply embedded in England's thought, insisted on the duty of humanity regardless of economic loss. Through the middle decades of the century, laws were put through, against ideological opposition, forbidding the sweating of women and children, limiting the hours of labour and recognising the right of the working men to band together (against economic "laws") to oppose their employers.

The State, to which the new capitalist extremists were

unwilling to grant any right to interfere in the operation of the economy, retained old and took on new powers of economic regulation. By 1910, while Socialists were still extremely few, the capitalist Liberal Government put through social laws even more strongly hampering the economic forces.

In America expanding capitalism was more powerful and less bound by tradition. Right up to the 1930s, for example, the great employers thought of trade unions as an offence against their freedom. It took large-scale strikes over that period to break the resistance of the employers against the combination of the trade unions and the Government of the United States. But now, for a generation, the United States has seen free negotiations on the part of the workers, a comprehensive system of social security and unemployment benefit. Moreover, the gross, discourteous and oppressive ostentation of the rich of some peripheral territories has not been typical of the U.S. or Britain. In the former, the tradition of popular democracy from the time of the frontier and of the Revolution prevented, even in the worst years, the very grossest manifestations of these ideas. In Britain too, it was partly the democratic tradition and partly, paradoxcially enough, the feudal tradition (which, as Marx himself says, involves a personal relationship and responsibility between possessor and poor) which inhibited and largely prevented these things.

In fact, just as the supposedly Marxist revolutions have taken place in countries notably lacking in the features he thought necessary for such a revolution, so his class struggle has reached its greatest influence in countries other than those he marked down for the great crisis of our times.

SOCIALISM AND THE STATE

IN modern times the main classes (in Marx's view) are the bourgeoisie, which owns the factories and means of production, and the industrial working class, or proletariat, which works them ; however, in addition to these key classes, whose antagonism is held to be the decisive element, various other classes survive ; in many parts of the world the landlords, representatives of an earlier form of class rule which has been overthrown or absorbed by the bourgeoisie, still play and important role ; and almost everywhere the peasantry is very important ; it owns its own land, its own share of the means of production, and hence is sometimes described as part of the small or "petty" bourgeoisie, a term which includes also such strata as shopkeepers.

However, on Marxist principles, the peasantry can no longer play an independent part, but must rely either on the bourgeoisie or on the proletariat.

The relation between this theory of class struggle and Socialism is as follows : any form of society represents the interests of the ruling class ; Socialist society (which is organised in the interests of the workers, and which, by eliminating privileges due to ownership and substituting for them rights gained by productive work, eventually turns the whole population into workers) represents the interests of the working class.

As we have seen, Marx held that each form of society hitherto known began as a progressive change, since it enabled production to increase, but eventually became

retrograde since it later prevented further possible increases in production. Capitalism made possible a great advance in production compared with the feudalism it overthrew ; but it now prevents a further rise in production, which Socialism would resume.

Socialism, as a social form, is simply opposed in people's minds to "capitalism." "Capitalism" signifies the ownership of the means of production by private persons who operate them for private profit. Clearly enough, there may also be a form of society in which the means of production are owned or controlled by the State yet operated for the benefit of a class or section and not for the community as a whole : only political democracy can ensure that State control of production is used for public ends. Marx saw this, but modern Communists do not, as we shall see.

It should also be apparent that neither "Socialism" nor "Capitalism" usually exists in a pure form. Even under extreme *laissez-faire* capitalism there are services which the State operates for the common benefit, while it is easy to envisage a society in which the ownership and profits of many undertakings remain in private hands but overall control and direction are in the hands of a democratic State which lays down the lines of production, limits the profits by taxation, and secures fair distribution of goods by food subsidies, and so on. For this, with considerable variations one way or the other, is the form of society of most of Northern and Western Europe at the moment.

It is probably true to say that all Socialists have been at least influenced by Marx's teachings, but it must be remembered that Socialism as a doctrine existed before

Marx and that the main considerations of many Socialists are not Marxist.

Many writers, from the time of Sir Thomas More and even earlier, have advocated societies in which the distribution of goods should be on a just basis, and in which there should be neither rich nor poor. The first man to whom the word "Socialist" was applied was Robert Owen, the English political and economic theorist and experimenter. In France, Fourier and St. Simon put forward views similar to his, and many other schools of thought followed, including the Anarchism of Bakunin, who held that the State should be dissolved immediately and a freely co-operative society take its place, and the Syndicalism of Sorel (much influenced by Marx) who held that the State should be replaced by the workers unions themselves, which should co-operatively own and operate the factories. In fact, just as State control does not necessarily mean social control, so social control can operate otherwise than through the State—as in Catalonia in 1936-37.

The idea of a society which would ensure to everyone fair shares of the goods produced, has thus long been widespread, and in some countries, particularly Britain, has produced a large Socialist Party without much reference to the special doctrines of Marx. A leading English Socialist has said that the main influence in the British Labour Party was not Marxism but Methodism, by which he meant that Christian ethical ideas of justice for all, rather than a special analysis of social classes, was the motive force of his party.

Yet the notions of class interest propounded by Marx have also entered the originally non-Marxist Socialist Parties. It is interesting to see that Socialist Parties

starting both from Marxist and non-Marxist premises have reached the same conclusions about many of the economic problems of Socialism. These conclusions differ from those of the Communists mainly in their attitude to political democracy.

It has sometimes been said that the actions of Socialist Parties are based on instinct and tradition, while those of the Communists are based on careful analysis of the situation and on a careful estimate of how to extract the maximum benefit from it. Such analyses are, however, limited by the fallibility of the men making them. They frequently produce disastrous results (like the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939) and they have the added fault that the Communist Party's tactics frequently change overnight to accord with some estimate or decision made by the leaders, so that instead of the solidarity produced by the free and natural following of a political trend the only binding links between Communists are the habits of discipline of the Party and its blind faith in its leadership.

On both Marxist and non-Marxist grounds the Party which introduces Socialism must represent the majority of the people : Marx would say that it represents the working class, which itself—in a developed country—forms a majority of the people. The key distinction between Communists and Socialists lies in their interpretation of the word "represent" in this sentence.

Hitler, like many another dictator, spoke of himself as "representing" the German people. Under the doctrines of Nazism he represented, and indeed embodied, their will. But it is quite clear that this claim was mere mysticism and that the German people had no method of making Hitler follow the will of the majority, or of remov-

ing him if they did not want him. It is true that he conducted plebiscites at which they "voted" for him, but it is undisputed that these votes, conducted under one-party dictatorship, were a farce.

The only real way in which anyone can be known to represent any nation, class or any other group is by free election. Any other claim—for instance to say, "I represent their real interests even if they don't like it"—is to arrogate to the "representer" the right of deciding for the group what is good for it ; he then represents only his own opinions.

For the Socialist "Socialism" means control by society of the State, which controls the means of production. State control of the means of production in itself is not Socialism. It may be a State capitalism in which the State runs the economy for private shareholders ; or it may run the economy in the interests of a group of managers or politicians who do not, technically speaking, "own" the means of production but extract the profit in the form of large "salaries". The economy of Nazi Germany, though it still contained large capitalistic elements, was tending to something like this.

So control of the State by society can be real only if it is maintained by the freely-elected representatives of society. The main body of Socialist opinion understands this. The Communists have dismissed it.

In Russia, the Communist Party and its leaders claim to represent the working class, but there is no longer any freedom of election from below. At the Soviet elections only one candidate is presented, and the 98 per cent votes from people like the deported Crimean Tartars and Volga-Germans indicate that the voting is no freer than it was in

the Nazi plebiscites. In fact the Russian Communist leaders do not represent the voters or the people except in the sense, which we have shown to be illusory, that they claim to do so. To speak of Russia as a workers' State is thus not correct. It is a Party Leaders' State.

It is also true that with the disappearance of any mechanism by which representation might be said to be achieved, the principle of fair shares has also gone. In Marx's views, under Socialism, payment should be by results, but he did not envisage that this would lead to much differentiation of pay. In Russia "by results" is now interpreted to cover an enormous differentiation. Marx's proviso that workers should enter the government temporarily and then return to the factory was never put into effect, and equality of pay as between workers and government officials has long since been abolished.

The word "State" is used in various senses by different people. The Marxist usage is to consider as the State the permanent administrative organisations which have a compulsive character. Marx sees the State, in this sense, as non-existent before the rise of social classes, and unnecessary when social classes have disappeared, and "Communism" has been attained.

Since in Marx's view politics is the reflection of economic conflict, all forms of rule represent the rule of one economic class over others. The State is, therefore, the agency of one or another clsss. This is a very bald and flat notion, and Marx does not himself utilize it without a good deal of reservation and attention to the actual facts of each given case.

In particular, he is always willing to see that the State itself can become an interest in its own right—e.g., that

the Bonapartist bureaucracy of the Second Empire in France was itself an established interest to some considerable extent and separate from the class interests conflicting within the country. Again (an even more radical amendment) he hypothesised the "Asiatic" form of State. In this the basic population is a peasantry inhabiting lands made fertile by irrigation and the State consists of an absolute monarch, and a bureaucracy, whose functions are simply irrigation, taxation and war.

In such a State, the ordinary class conflicts are of very little importance. That part of the economy which does not consist of village communes depends entirely on the State. When the pharaoh or rajah moves his capital the city he has left does not continue but reverts to jungle or desert. Even economically it is the State apparatus that is dominant and various merchants and so on are little more than dependent auxiliaries. This concept of a bureaucratic autocracy shows that Marx would not have been at a loss to understand Stalin or Mao Tse-tung.

Marx held that to talk of liberty in connection with the State was meaningless. The State, as the organisation of compulsion, was the opposite of freedom. But while the bourgeois State was an instrument of the minority against the majority the proletarian State would be an instrument of the majority against the minority, would require far less special machinery for suppression, and would gradually "wither away" as the establishment of a truly classless society became complete when rule over people would give way to "the administration of things", and full co-operation would replace compulsion.

In the economic sphere Marx called the first phase,

when the State still existed, "Socialism". There would then be payment for the worker by results, since the habits of bourgeois society would persist and prevent a freer attitude. When the State withered away and production reached new heights, the second phase—"Communism"—would be entered, when all would work through habit or sense of responsibility, and receive whatever goods they wished.

Even in the first phase Marx saw the State as being far less highly organised than under capitalism. The accepted Marxist view, in fact, was that it should be manned by workers who, after an administrative stint, would return to their jobs, and that the pay even of the highest State officials should not be more than that of the average worker. His view of the organisation of the State was that it should be a democratic parliamentary republic.

We now come to another major difference in interpretation between the Communists and that large section of the world's Socialist Parties which accepts Marx as a teacher : the meaning to be attached to his phrase the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Marx spoke of the parliamentary regimes of last century as "dictatorships of the bourgeoisie". But they were not totalitarian—Marx himself wrote and published under one—and he even held that the proletariat could come to power legally under some of them. So it is clear that all he meant was t hat the State machinery, as at that time, was a mechanism for imposing the bourgeois will in the decisive matter of the organisation of society. He seems to have regarded the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as the same sort of situation with the roles reversed—and the amendment that

proletarian rule would not need to be so strict. The one "dictatorship of the proletariat" which he recognised in his lifetime was the Paris Commune of 1871, which, though its two months of life were passed in extreme peril and vicious civil war raging immediately outside the city, was very considerably less authoritarian than the later Communist regimes. And most schools of Marxists have held that Socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat are compatible with ordinary democratic liberties.

Marx's theory of the State, particularly in the sophisticated way in which he interpreted it, is a striking and interesting one. Where it runs into difficulties is not so much in basic theory but in the absence of any clear notion of the actual operation of the proletarian State he foresaw. Although he expected an increase in democracy, and a decrease in the repressive activities of the working-class State as compared with its predecessors, and although Engels spoke of the democratic republic as being the right form for the workers' State, neither of them developed any true operational theory of democracy.

As has been pointed out by Milovan Djilas* this is the great defect in Marx's political theory. The answer seems to be that he simply accepted the electoral arrangements and so forth of the democratic "bourgeois" republics of his time and expected these to become real and genuine as the former ruling class lost its ability to pervert and

*Djilas, a former Yugoslav Vice-Premier and Politburo member, was stripped of all party offices in 1954 for "deviations". His book, *The New Class*, which was smuggled out of Yugoslavia and published abroad, analysed modern Communism and brought him a seven-year prison sentence.

influence the electorate.

This would indeed follow on Marx's grounds. The intervening revolutionary period he naturally saw as having more elements of dictatorship; but "dictatorship" in the middle of the 19th century was a word used of such regimes as Garibaldi's in Southern Italy—a temporary hold on power for a few months after a revolution, until it could be handed over to the people. It turned out that Stalin was a different type from Garibaldi.

Nor is such a comment a superficial one. Marx seems to assume, quite naively, that the Leftist leaders would be men without the thirst for power. Though he had himself noted that the rulers of States in bourgeois and earlier times had often been men of ambition so great that they had attempted and sometimes succeeded in setting up their own personal power even in opposition to the class they were supposed to represent, it did not occur to him that revolutionary parties too contain power maniacs, terrorists and men of ambition.

Moreover, Marx—and Lenin after him—misapprehended the complexity of modern administration. Marx thought that all administration in a highly industrialised State could be reduced to fairly simple book-keeping. Lenin said that "every cook must learn to rule the State," and as late as 1916 he was writing that State power could be exercised by ordinary workers temporarily withdrawn from production to be returned to their ordinary jobs after they had done their stint as the government. In fact—and leaving aside the particular situation of Lenin's revolution, which called for rule by a coherent group of his old fellow-conspirators—the modern State and economic administration is not less but more complicated

and specialised than it was a 100 years ago, in Russia as much as elsewhere.

Although this in itself is not incompatible with democracy, it fitted in even better with the Stalinist bureaucratic autocracy, helping to make it a form of State not merely different from but almost opposite to the one Marx foresaw as succeeding "bourgeois democracy."

CLASS AND PARTY

MARX saw political parties as the representatives of classes (and it is strictly contrary to his doctrines, and those of Lenin, to believe that a party can represent both the proletariat and another class, even the peasantry).

When Lenin developed new principles of Party organisation, his highly centralised and disciplined Bolshevik Party became so much an entity in its own right that it proved much more sensitive to the theoretical deductions and the orders of its experts and its leaders than to the feelings of the working class. So its approach to that class, and its attempts to make use of that class's desires, were increasingly, as it were, from the outside. It became increasingly common in Communist circles for the words "the proletariat" to be used where what was really meant was "the Party."

The reason why the proletariat is regarded by Marx as the only class capable of conducting a firm and uncompromising struggle for Socialism is that it alone has no interest at all in the preservation of any form of private ownership of the means of production while the peasantry, for example, though exploited by and frequently hostile to the capitalist system is itself dominated by a bourgeois ideal—the desire to obtain its own individual ownership of the land. In addition the proletariat is supposed to be schooled by the very conditions of industrial work into a solidarity and discipline unequalled by any other class.

Marx believed that the workers' organisations were automatically committed to a struggle against capitalism,

and that all that was required to turn this into a conscious political struggle was propaganda, within the movement, of Marxist theoretical teaching. Marx was much opposed to the idea of a Party being an elite complete in itself and able to operate regardless of the wishes of the working class it was meant to represent. He favoured those who held his views entering or creating mass parties wholly sensitive to the immediate desires of the working class, representing them and not dictating to them, while at the same time educating them on Marxist lines.

When Lenin organised the tight group of professional revolutionaries which was the Bolshevik Party, he intended it simply as a method suitable for illegal action under Tsarism. When bourgeois rule could be brought in, he believed that the Party would become a broad democratic organisation like the Socialist Parties in Western Europe. Trotsky foresaw the danger when he said that the dictatorship of the proletariat would become the dictatorship of the Party ; the dictatorship of the Party would become the dictatorship of the Central Committee ; and the dictatorship of the Central Cammittee would become dictatorship by one man.

Lenin was able to seize power when on any Marxist view there was no adequate Russian proletariat. To maintain his position against the huge hostile majority he continued the dictatorial and centralised organisation of the conspiratorial party. One of his leading critics was Rosa Luxemburg, the great theorist of the Polish Left. Although Rosa Luxemburg is a Communist heroine, and was murdered by her captors after the failure of the Communist revolt in Berlin in 1919, her works are banned throughout most of the Communist world. Like Marx,

she was strongly opposed to any form of monopoly by government or party Press.

We have seen that Communists are not using the word "dictatorship" in the sense in which Marx and leading Marxists envisaged it. But nor are they using the word "proletariat" in Marx's way. Rule is not exercised by the working class as such but by the Party. Shortly after the Russian Bolshevik Revolution the Mensheviks gained control of several of the most powerful trade unions, and a series of strikes had to be broken by Lenin and his supporters. The great rebellions against Communism in the past few years have not been rural or military or bourgeois. They have been revolts of workers.

The proletarian dictatorship was said by Marx to be the most democratic form of rule, as far as the proletariat itself was concerned. Even now we find it often officially described as "proletarian democracy". But it is not a principle of democracy to do what the mass of the people concerned are opposed to, even if you think it is in their best interests. There is no tyranny that has ever existed which would not have maintained that it was acting in the people's best interests.

However "dictatorship of the proletariat" is interpreted, it must, anyhow, signify some sort of rule by, or at least on behalf of, the industrial working class. And it has always been the claim of Communist Parties everywhere that they are "parties of the working class". The Soviet State itself is described in its constitution as a "workers' and peasants' State". Indeed there is scarcely a pronouncement by Communists which does not identify Communist rule with the interests of the working class :

even in his Secret Speech Khrushchev partly excused Stalin's crimes on the grounds that Stalin considered that these crimes should be committed "in the interests of the Party, of the working masses...in this lies the whole tragedy !"

This is a peculiarly subjective and un-Marxist view. It had previously been the pride of Communists that they did not judge by subjective intention—or even palliate a judgment on such grounds. No doubt even the oppositionists Zinoviev and Bukharin had thought that they were acting in the interests of the working class. The Marxist, like the psychologist, has always recognised the self-deception that enables actions hostile to the people to be undertaken with a clear conscience.

But the essence of the matter is the question of the relation between the working class and the Communist rulers. Marxists have long recognised that the working class is not automatically the repository of all political wisdom, that leadership and persuasion are required to make it go along the right—*i.e.* Marxist—path. And they have conceded that at any given time there may be elements who only see immediate interests. But on the whole the working class is supposed to be capable, from its very nature, of seeing the correctness of the Marxist position and following the lead of the Marxist Party.

In the Soviet Union it has long been plain that certain governmental practices are not those normally acceptable to workers. The "norm" system of piece-work does not, on the face of it, look the sort of thing that workers like. Moreover for many years it was clearly a fact that workers did not strike, and even now do so very rarely and are instantly suppressed; but it is difficult to imagine that even

the most perfect system possible seldom provides sufficient discontent to justify a strike.

The Soviet-style Marxist was able for a long time to make certain saving assumptions. First of all were the simple scholastic ones—the workers had such high political standards that they knew their own long-term interests, accepted the norm system for that reason, and would never think of striking. After all, on the Marxist view they "owned" the factories and so would simply be striking "against themselves". This simple explanation was for the simple-minded.

In any case the general allegiance of the working class to "its" State and Party, which followed *a priori* from Marxist doctrine, had not then received total, unanswerable refutation. After Stalin's death, and in particular in 1956, this came. Strikes, and risings led by the workers, took place in East Berlin and Plzen in 1953. And in 1956 the greater events in Poland and Hungary exposed the whole fallacy.

The strikes and riots in Poznan in June, 1956, were admitted by the Polish leadership to have been caused by a complete loss of faith in the regime on the part of the working class. And in Budapest the workers not only formed the backbone of the rising but carried on a bitter general strike, long after the fighting had been put down, against the whole power of the occupation army and of the recognised Communist State. The building workers of the Stalinallee in Berlin, the Zispo machinery workers in Poznan, the Czepel steel workers and the Tatabanya miners in Hungary quite simply destroyed the foundations of the Communist view. Not once but three times the entire working class was ranged against the Party machine

and the "workers' State". In each case the working class had had years of experience of "its own" rule and had had access only to the Party's teachings and interpretations.

Nor were these great strikes and risings easy undertakings. On tne contrary they were desperate affairs, setting the workers against the whole apparatus of the State, the armed police and in the last resort the armies of occupation. The relations of the Party and the class it was supposed to represent were shown to be bitterly hostile. Workers' democracy and proletarian rule were proven to be myths.

The Communist Parties are organised on the basis of what is called "Democratic Centralism". In theory this means that the whole membership votes on policy, and then accepts the final decision and carries it out unquestioningly at the leaders' orders through a quasi-military discipline. In practice the strict organisation and the disciplinary principles ensure that the orders of leaders enable them to control the machinery, as it is supposed to exist in the Party, for putting the views of the rank and file, so that influence from below does not make itself felt. And indeed, the Soviet Communist Party went fifteen years without a Party Congress in spite of huge changes in tactics and policy during that period.

In China, and even more so, though every effort has been made to conceal this, the proletarian basis of the Communist Party has been largely fiction.

It is reasonably clear that the Marxist theory of the proletariat as the necessary basis for the revolution was in practice long ago abandoned by Mao and his colleagues. The composition of the Party at the time of its victory has

been estimated at 90 per cent peasant, and a great majority of the remainder were intellectuals.

Nevertheless doctrinal homage continued to be paid to the proletariat, and the virtues required of a Communist were always described as proletarian. But "proletarian" as the description of the attitude of a Communist no longer had any connection with his real class background, and was merely the equivalent of saying whether he was a good Communist or not. This, in effect, reversed the Marxist method.

The lack of proletarian background was evaded in various ways—such as counting the "rural proletariat" and referring to the poor peasantry as "semi-proletarian". A more revealing justification, however, was given in an editorial in the *People's Daily* of July 1, 1950, which pointed out that about 1,000,000 members of the Party had lived with rations but no pay for a long period of war and revolution. "In other words they have led a life of strict military Communism. Judging from their political awareness and way of living, they may be said to be the most outstanding elements of the working class." Thus the Party life is made an adequate substitute for genuine working-class background—again a complete reversal of Marxist doctrine on the relations of class and Party.

For the dominating consideration for the Chinese leadership is almost certainly the feeling that a strengthening of Chinese industrial and military power is the most urgent necessity. Military and industrial strength imply high-pressure industrialisation with, as its doctrinal corollary, forced collectivisation of the land. And this cannot be carried through without a great tightening of the

Party's grip on all aspects of society and at the same time an increase in its discipline—that is in its own reliability as an instrument of the leadership.

And here the fact that the Party has long since become completely detached from the class interests it is supposed to serve, and has developed into a quite autonomous social force, is the most important factor. When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia the original Marxist notion of rule by a Socialist Party fully representing the conscious wishes of the masses of the working class had already been largely departed from in favour of a revolutionary elite. But still the Bolsheviks, though they did not represent a majority, were at least firmly rooted in an advanced and politically conscious section of the working class, and this remained generally true at least until the mid-1920s, making it difficult for completely arbitrary decision to be taken purely at the top level.

The Communist Party in Russia at present has revived a few of the forms but has lost almost all real contact. The Communist Parties in the free world, though largely reconstructed on the Stalinist model, in a few cases at least have preserved some semblance of working-class roots. In China this is not the case. The Party's loyalties and attachments are to itself alone. And this clearly makes it much easier for policies unacceptable to the masses to be put through without popular opposition gaining adequate reflection inside the Party.

Yet a further transposition has taken place. The purpose of the proletarian dictatorship in the countries in which it has been established has been said to be the "building of Socialism." But Marx envisaged the working class coming to power in countries where it formed the

vast majority of the population, where industry was already thoroughly established, and where all that was required was a reorganisation of social and political forms. For him the "construction" of Socialism would not have meant anything, for he thought of the problem simply as a question of organisation. But, seizing control in countries without industry or proletariat, the Communists have, in a very un-Marxist way, been required to create the prerequisites of their coming to power many years after it had occurred.

The struggle for industrialising Russia was so difficult, and indeed murderous, that it has totally dominated the thought of the Russian leaders, and they now equate the "construction of Socialism" quite simply with "the creation of heavy industry". Khrushchev conceded that this had taken place in Russia in conditions of terror and tyranny. But he still seems to regard this as but a superficial blemish. In China, things are tougher still. Socialism, to Marx as to others, once meant co-operation, and the proletarian dictatorship meant liberty.

Perhaps Marx's ideas on the matter were naive. And perhaps his conception of future society is out of date. What is certain is that those who repeat his words are using them to conceal a far less desirable form of society.

IMPERIALISM

LENIN'S great contribution to Marxist theory is always stated to have been the development of a scientific account of imperialism. Lenin held that (as Marx had not seen) the capitalist States had to seek more and more markets as those which they had previously operated in became saturated, and as new capitalist countries entered them more and more competitively and bitterly. This they could only do, he held, by carving up the remaining territories of the world as areas in which the home country's capitalism could find new markets and profits.

This carving up of the world had been completed, or virtually so, by the end of the 19th century, so that capitalist powers, now meriting the title "imperialist", had no recourse but to turn on each other and fight wars in order to seize markets hitherto belonging to their rivals.

Lenin's other point was that capitalism was less and less in the hands of the industrial owners and more and more controlled by the great banks. He therefore saw imperialism as capitalism in its final stage, dominated by "finance-capital". Further, the "superprofits" which the capitalists obtained from exploiting the colonies enabled them to "bribe" the upper stratum of the working class, and thus create Social-Democratic Parties not truly devoted to the overthrow of capitalism.

Lenin, as he acknowledges in his booklet *Imperialism*, got a good deal of this notion from the English Liberal, Hobson, who wrote on the subject in the first years of this century. Hobson, who opposed the expansionist views

then prevailing in England, was dealing with a definite phenomenon. Joseph Chamberlain, the Radical Birmingham industrialist, had become the proponent of annexation in Africa and elsewhere on the grounds, or partly on the grounds, that this would benefit the economic interests of his country, and in fact of his class. And it was certainly partly due to Chamberlain's ideas and those of his associates that the English grab for Africa got its impetus.

Chamberlain was in fact putting forward a definite theory. This theory had a certain effect in making some Englishmen believe it, and was partly translated into practice. But the fact that a theory is held by a capitalist, even if it is backed by action, does not mean that the capitalist is right. Still less does it mean that all other capitalists in all other countries, or even in his own country, support him.

In England a good deal of the imperialist wave which lasted a couple of decades at the end of Queen Victoria's reign came not from capitalists at all but from the old Tory jingoes, the officer class and so on. And Chamberlain finally left the great party of the capitalists, the Liberals, and joined that of the landlords, the Conservatives. For in reality the markets of territories like West Africa were scarcely worth having. The raw materials were valuable, but still they brought extremely marginal profits compared with those made by English industry as a whole. And some of the great capitalist States, like America, never found it necessary to conquer large areas. Other small capitalist States, like Sweden, contrived to give their working class high standards without having any colonies. And there are many other objections to the theory.

But the greatest objection actually came, unknown to Lenin, at the time he was writing. He worked with considerable research to establish that the Big Five banks of Germany dominated the economy and hence that German imperialism was due to their machinations. The facts are totally different. The great banks were naturally conservative and concerned with reasonable and firm profits, and they looked with disfavour on the wild-cat companies and (largely non-bourgeois) get-rich-quick adventurers who were trying to involve Germany in African adventures. And the clincher is that at the time of the Agadir crisis, when the Kaiser was playing for the annexation of Morocco, these banks submitted a secret memorandum to the Government urging very powerfully the case against African adventures and attempted colonial expansion of this sort.

Another argument of Lenin's, to counter the obvious fact that British trade and interests with a country like the Argentine were more important than with the whole of her colonial empire put together, was that the Argentine was a "semi-colony". But this proposition refutes the whole thesis. If a semi-colony can deliver the goods what is the point of having a real colony ?

All this is not to deny the obvious fact that powers with better weapons and transport have tended to expand in previous centuries at the expense of weaker neighbours. Nor would one deny that some countries have influence in others to an extent which hampers the independence of the smaller, less powerful State. It did not require any great theory to see these points. States have certainly conquered and ruled areas inhabited by other nations. Economic exploitation has also taken place. It is not

that there is no such thing as imperialism. It is simply that the Communist theory of why such things take place is wrong, since the facts show that it does not happen in the way they describe or with the support of the social groups on whom they blame it ; and that therefore any consequences supposed to result from that theory have no connection with reality.

By non-Marxists, Lenin's view of the causations of imperialism had long been thought faulty. There had never been a capitalist class so united that it would not cheerfully sacrifice the interests of a cocoa company in West Africa rather than have a war. Non-economic motives have obviously dominated the real proponents of expansionism in modern times, like the Kaiser, Hitler and Stalin. The retreat of countries like Great Britain from their former colonial territories in the east has not led to any economic disadvantage whatever on the trade side. This does not indicate that the trade between the countries is now conducted under imperialist pressure, but the contrary, that trade even when the countries were colonial was on a reasonably fair market basis.

There are naturally exceptions to this, but they are minor ones ; nor have the rates of production of the great capitalist countries either decreased or come to grief now that the market of the world have allegedly been saturated for fifty years. In fact, after the First World War it was maintained that the great Crisis of Capitalism would grow worse and worse *because* one large area had already been removed from the potential capitalist market—the Soviet Union. Yet, as we have said, the whole thesis of "pure capitalism" is not sensible and various forms of mixed economy exist in the West.

As for the prediction that imperialists must go to war with each other, this subsists to this day as part of the theory. During the 1920s it was publicly proclaimed by Stalin that an Anglo-American war was inevitable. This sounds ridiculous and is—even more than the Franco-British war predicted in 1920 under Lenin's aegis. But its absurdity was not Stalin's fault. It follows *ex-hypothesi*. And the only way to overcome the absurdity is to abandon the hypothesis. This runs as follows : "If there are great imperialist powers in the world, they are bound to clash. The leading imperialist powers are bound to clash most greatly. Britain and America faced each other all over the world. Therefore their clash was bound to be a major one. Imperialist clashes are bound to lead to war. Therefore there will be an Anglo-American war".

The theory by which all non-Communist systems are called "capitalist", and it is then maintained that they have long since entered into "the General Crisis of Capitalism" which began in 1914, automatically implies that only temporary and minor stabilisations can take place. The General Crisis is due to the absence of new markets to expand into. This must render the pressure on the economy worse and worse and the rivalries between the capitalisms worse and worse. It must therefore produce the intra-capitalist wars on the one hand and economic super-crisis on the other.

The 1914 war certainly came, though its economic causation was, to say the least, only partial. And the capitalist crisis came in 1929. Clearly the system was on its last legs. But since then Western production has greatly increased, in spite of a war. The standard of living has gone up enormously in all the Western coun-

tries and, though no economy can be called crisis-proof in any general sense, they show themselves able to control the allegedly inevitable cyclic crisis, and the State has submitted even the most capitalist funds to the disciplines necessary for this.

It is unfortunate that the Soviet leaders are unable to abandon the formulae which have turned out to be so inaccurate. It means that they attach more importance to words than to realities. This is a dangerous thing for any political leadership. Its association with the belief that they are chosen to save the world is particularly unfortunate. That world peace should depend even in part on minds incapable of assimilating anything that does not fit a formula is a very unpleasant thought for the rest of us.

But the crux of the theory is not so much that it maintains that capitalist States must commit aggression. Facts can, up to a point, be interpreted to fit this view. Since all sorts of States commit aggression sometimes, it can always be argued that if a capitalist one does so it is capitalist aggression. But the theory has another aspect, by which it stands or falls.

On any Marxist view "Socialist" States are incapable of imperialism and aggression. Elements of chauvinism had shown themselves in the USSR in the 1930s, and it was true that Stalin's attitude to Tito would not satisfy the Marxist purist. The war in Korea and other earlier adventures like the Finish war of 1939-40 had raised violent doubts. But in all these cases subsidiary assumptions could provide justification. Since 1956, for the first time, the Marxist has been faced with absolutely clear cases. Soviet troops, against the desperate resistance of

an ill-armed populace, imposed a puppet regime in Hungary, and in Tibet the people were put down in blood by the Chinese Red Army. The facts admitted no doubt. And later came the Chinese attack on India.

It was plain once and for all that there are other motives for aggression and for imperialism than those which Lenin had traced to the nature of latter-day capitalism. "Socialist" States had proved imperialist, and in a more thorough and bloody way than any other State then existing.

Two things totally falsify the Communist, quasi-Marxist, theory of imperialism. First, as we see, the expansionist, aggressive wars waged to extend or resume Russian and Chinese power in Hungary, in Tibet and against India. Second, the fact that apart from a few countries in the southern end of Africa, the only nations now not enjoying State independence are the 132 million non-Chinese and non-Russian inhabitants of Central Asia, Mongolia, Tibet, the Caucasus, the Ukraine and the Baltic States. For not only have the Communist States practised aggression. They have also refused independence to the smaller nations already in their grasp. Inheriting the areas of former capitalist or feudal empires, they have retained them in their grip.

AGRICULTURE

A huge and basic flaw in the entire Communist system as it stands throughout the areas it controls is the forcible collectivisation of the land. Marx expected the Socialist revolution in countries like England, in which there could scarcely be said to be a peasantry at all and where the land might be nationalised. He recognised, however, that even in some of the developed countries of Western Europe there would still be large peasant areas; and Engels took the view that all these should be gradually induced by persuasion and general benefits to cooperative farming.

When Lenin came to power he legally 'nationalised' the land in accordance with the doctrine : but knowing the doctrine to be not really applicable to the true situation he in fact divided the land among the peasantry. Like Engels, he urged that in the very long run these small individual farms should be collectivised by persuasion. However, from 1929 Stalin launched a totally different policy; forced and immediate collectivisation.

His motive was tied up with the false situation in which—from the point of view of true Marxism—the Russian Communists now found themselves. With a poorly industrialised State, lacking an adequate proletariat, they were not in the situation envisaged for a ruling Marxist party. The decision was taken to do the opposite of what Marx had recommended—to use governmental power to create an industry and a proletariat. But where was the capital to come from ? The

Stalinist solution, apart from a general tightening of belts all round, was to squeeze it out of the peasantry, and while famine raged in the Ukraine millions of tons of wheat were exported for the necessary cash.

But the small independent peasant cannot easily be squeezed. The solution was to force him under control in collectives run not "collectively" but by the party militant. The peasant fought back, killing half of the Russian livestock as he did so. So the policy was economically disastrous and certainly produced less capital than could have been got by easier pressure. In the more liberal Communist countries, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, collectivisation has been shelved. In Russia no change has been made : and Russia is now importing grain. In China, the system is even tougher : and China suffers famine.

RUSSIAN AND CHINESE MARXISM

IN the long run the predictive side of Marx's theory boiled down to saying that as a result of class struggle the ownership of the means of production would pass to society as a whole and that a world community would then evolve in which class had ceased to exist and the compulsive elements of the State would have withered away. As we have said, in the last years it has become apparent that Marxist dogma has been used to create a non-capitalist State very different from anything Marx foresaw.

We have noted that, on Marx's view, the development of capitalism in the advanced countries produced a state of affairs in which the productive forces of society were already concentrated to such a degree that only *political* revolution, removing the bourgeois classes from the ownership and control of *production*, would be necessary. The structure and relations of the economy were already potentially socialised, needing only the change in class rule.

At the same time, Marx thought that in the advanced industrial countries the class system had become increasingly polarised until the vast majority of the population were proletarian. Since throughout his lifetime industrialisation and proletarianisation were increasing where he expected revolution—particularly England and Germany—it became increasingly the case that from his point of view the vast majority of people there were potential Socialists.

Thus it is natural that, as can be traced in his writings,

he increasingly drew away from the semi-conspiratorial notions of his earlier years and increasingly favoured the large mass of working class parties of the type of the Social Democratic Party in Germany. In certain countries of the West—he named at various times England, Holland and the United States—he foresaw the possibility of a peaceful revolution through the ordinary processes of political democracy. Elsewhere he believed that the ruling classes would much more probably attempt to sabotage democratic progress ; it would, therefore, have to be combined with militant action.

In any case, it is basic to Marx that the political parties, and the political structure of society, reflect the economic and class structure. It therefore did not occur to him that a Socialist victory could take place in a country in which the proletariat was in a notable minority. He conceived, indeed, that revolutions in countries like Russia could come about as part of a European Socialist revolution, with the proletariats of the advanced countries providing the political, economic and moral aid necessary to sustain a Socialist regime in Russia.

If his basic view ruled out the possibility of independent social revolution in Russia, this applies far more strongly to countries like China. In Russia, even in Marx's time, a certain amount of industrialisation had taken place. And by the beginning of the First World War Russia's industry ranked fifth or sixth in the world. In the big cities large scale factories had produced a small but concentrated proletariat. And though before 1917 this was never regarded even by Lenin and the Bolsheviks as enough in itself to make a purely Socialist revolution possible it was far more promising than anything that can

be said of China even forty years later.

Right up to 1917 Lenin, in common with all the other Bolsheviks and members of all the other Socialist parties in Russia, considered that Russia was not ripe for Socialism. He foresaw after the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy a "bourgeois democratic" society. At best he hoped that this would take the form of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry"—that is, the alliance of the Socialist minority with the peasant parties which (as was shown in the election to the Constituent Assembly in November, 1917) had the support of the mass of the people.

He changed his mind in 1917, taking the view that the whole of Europe had been reduced by the war to a potentially revolutionary situation, so that a Bolshevik seizure of power, even though unjustified on Russian grounds alone, could be regarded as the first breakthrough in what would become a European revolution. He had difficulty in carrying his party with him. And we can be certain that if he had not been present the Bolsheviks would not have attempted to impose their lone rule.

As the Bolsheviks hung on in Russia, the expected revolutions in the West seemed to start in 1919 with the Communist regimes in Hungary and Bavaria and risings elsewhere. From then until 1923, when a last attempt to raise Germany failed, the Bolshevik leaders were confidently expecting and depending on the breakthrough in the West. Lenin spoke of the transfer of the seat of power to Berlin or London, the more natural capitals of a Marxist Europe, as soon as this had been accomplished.

Nothing of the sort happened. The Bolsheviks found themselves in a position no Marxist had foreseen or desired. They were in power in a country which on Marxist grounds did not have adequate class support for them. And there was no question at all of arriving at Socialism by simple administrative changes. Moreover, even the industrial working class now underwent a strong revulsion, and strikes and risings in favour of a more modern Socialism took place.

The First World War had caused a great split. Marx and Engels had, on the whole, taken the view that in such war the prime object must be to bring down the greatest bastion of autocracy in Tsarist Russia. Lenin, however, developed the theory that *all* Socialists must oppose their own governments in this conflict. Outside Russia very few did. The conclusion Lenin drew was that Socialists everywhere had become corrupted and that a new and purified set of Socialist parties needed to be constructed everywhere on the Bolshevik model. And after the war he set about splitting the Left throughout the world—and, as it turned out, preventing the rise to power of revolutionary Left-wing regimes in a number of countries in Western Europe, and later still disrupting the resistance to Fascism.

But what was this Bolshevik model that Lenin now regarded as essential? If the criterion for a "good" Socialist had merely been the acceptance of such principles as opposing "imperialist war", a collection of radical yet democratic revolutionary parties might have appeared. But Lenin insisted also upon acceptance of the Bolshevik organisational system. The Bolshevik organisation had from the start been as far as possible from the democratic

mass organisations which had had Marx's blessing in the West. Operating in conditions of illegality under the Tsar it had become a conspiratorial centralised sect. Effective power remained in the hands of professional revolutionaries, men of the underground party machine. When this party seized control in Russia, this tight and disciplined organisation stood them in good stead. Hotly opposed from all sides and unable to rely upon voluntary support of the working class, they fell back more and more upon ruthless discipline.

It becomes all the more important to stress again and again that though Marxism is nowadays very commonly identified with the official teaching of all the Communist Parties and in particular with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union this is an historical accident. There have been many tendencies and differences of interpretation among Marxists, and the fact that one or another of the sects arising has attained State power is not necessarily relevant to its claims to doctrinal purity.

If it comes to that, the present day Marxism of the Soviet leadership does not even much resemble the Marxism of the Bolsheviks who seized power in 1917. Marx himself was a scholar and the greater part of his time, in spite of much political activity, was spent in serious thought and research. Lenin, for the greater part of his career, was the full-time leader of a small political revolutionary group who lived in exile ; and in these circumstances he too had a good deal of time to devote to theoretical study. Nevertheless, the deterioration in the quality of his thought as compared with Marx's is already noticeable. And when the revolutions of 1917 brought him into full-time political and State activity his views began to

be affected even more strongly by day-to-day questions of power.

His *State and Revolution,* written in 1916, is a clear enough statement of Marxist teaching on democracy, State power and the temporary "dictatorship of the proletariat". But it is very largely contradicted by his actions over the following couple of years. Even so, under Lenin's rule in Russia the study of Marxism was still pursued seriously. Even though the Soviet State was often pursuing policies which could only be justified in Marxist terms by a good deal of juggling the theoritical study, the formal pronouncements, and even the juggling itself, were conducted by thoughtful and reputable scholars and expressed in intelligent and even sophisticated language. Bukharin, among the politicians, was deeply read in Marxism and other philosophies—even though Lenin was not entirely satisfied with his understanding of Marxism. And the Academies were headed by independent Marxist scholars.

Stalin, however, came to power in the late 1920s simply as a full-time machine politician seeking personal dictatorship. This had several results on both the content and the quality of the official doctrines of the USSR. In the first place all independent thought disappeared. The Marxist scholars of the 1920s went into the labour camps and the execution cellars. The object of theoretical studies became purely what it had only been partly in the first years of the Soviet regime, a "Marxism" for justifying the acts of the leadership. Without the roughage of argument, and with all the finer brains silenced or destroyed, even this sort of apologetics deteriorated.

Stalin made certain contributions to doctrine. In the first place he produced out of nowhere the theory that the

class struggle would become sharper and sharper as the remnants of the former proletarian class disappeared. This is, of course, entirely contrary to the orthodox Marxist views. Its motive was to provide justification for terrorism in the 1930s far greater than had been found necessary in the 1920s. Now this view has been repudiated by Khrushchev and the current Soviet leadership, though not by the Chinese. A cynic might remark that Khrushchev and the others owe their present status to being beneficiaries of the Great Terror of 1936 to 1938, and can now afford such repudiation of it as does not involve removing them too.

Stalin also introduced the thesis that it was possible to attain Communism in one or more countries, even while the rest of the world remained non-Socialist. This, again, is contrary to the older Marxism. And this time the idea has been retained by Khrushchev.

Why it accords so ill with the Marxist notion of Communism is clear enough. It implies, and this is openly stated in Russia, that all forms of pressure against hostile States will continue to operate. That is, an army, together with conscription, will remain in existence; the security police will continue to operate against "enemy" agents; the economy will be heavily committed to defence requirements; and so on. In fact, a very important part of the State apparatus will remain in being. Since the whole moral and political basis of Marx's view of Communism is tied up with the "withering away" of the State, what this means in fact is that Soviet criteria for Communism have now become almost wholly economic. In fact, while condemning any changes in Marxism, when put forward by opponents of the Soviet Party, with cries that a wicked

campaign of "revisionism" is afoot, the Russian Communists themselves quite happily do any revising that happens to suit their own interest.

The process by which Marxism became not the master but the handmaiden of the political rulers went hand in hand with a general totalitarianising of the whole country and movement. Lenin had happily said that, although he personally did not like Mayakovsky and various other modern writers and artists, he was not going to inflict his personal views on anybody. But under Stalin the political leadership came to regard its tastes in these matters as part of "Marxist" theory. It still does. In fact, it has come to the point where men with skill and training in political matters adequate to bring them to power are claiming thereby to be more competent to judge the nature of art, and its suitability to a Socialist society, than Communists who have simply studied Marxism or practised the arts. It is not rare for a politician to have views on art. President Truman frequently expressed his horror at modern painting and resented critics who objected to his daughter's singing voice. But he had not the power—quite probably not even the desire—to give his views legal effect. The *apparatchik's* conception of "Marxism" is precisely as a justification for the view that the politician knows best about everything. It was not Marx's.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin removed the last disguises from the fact that the Communist world had been ruled by fiat from the top. And though Stalin's particular crimes were denounced there has been no reorganisation to prevent power accumulating as before in the hands of one or a few men. The Party Congress at which Stalin was denounced accepted all the resolutions

"unanimously", just as in the time of the dead dictator.

Moreover, it is not simply a question of Stalin. It is now asserted that all of Lenin's companions and successors had deviated from his views : Bukharin and Trotsky, Rykov and Zinoviev, and now Stalin. Nor could it even be said that the rulers on whom Stalin's mantle had fallen were the sort of people that any properly run Party should have elected or re-elected. Malenkov and Molotov, Bulganin and Beria, were all revealed as having plotted to seize power contrary to the interests of the people.

Nor has Khrushchev's assumption of the "anti-Stalinist" role proved very impressive. Certainly the fallen leaders, or some of them, were closely associated with the terror. So was Khrushchev. Nor has he repudiated the system of Stalinism as apart from certain excesses. Freedom of speech has not been restored in Russia, even to the extent which was practised in Lenin's time.

One major point was made clear by Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin and by the similar exposures of the behaviour of Communist leaders like Rakosi in the satellite States. Something was wrong with the view that the destruction of capital-owning classes meant that only idealistic executors of the will of the working class could rise to the top. It was shown that men like Stalin and Beria and Yezhov—at best suspicious, terroristic and liable to dangerous error; at worst dominated by the most vicious, selfish and treacherous motives—could rise to the power. The Marxist assumptions had proved at least defective, and perhaps basically erroneous.

As we saw, Marx seems simply to have ignored the

possibility that a "Socialist" and proletarian State could produce the political system described by Khrushchev. The clear social analyses of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and Lenin's *State and Revolution* lay down that a "Socialist" community with a proletarian dictatorship was bound to be more and more "democratic". And however one might interpret the word democratic this was certainly taken by everyone to signify at least that the initiative and participation of the masses in ruling the country would be enormously increased compared with any previous regime. A form of rule in which everything important was decided from above by one man simply could not arise.

It is true that Marx, and Lenin too, had warned about the tendency of bureaucracy to entrench and perpetuate itself. But the solidarity of bureaucracy could never, in their view, be as powerful as that of a true economic class. Nor was its growth seen as conceivably leading to autocracy. It was regarded simply as a more or less superficial imperfection to be guarded against.

Moreover, Stalin's errors as illustrated by Khrushchev were not merely those of a suspicious tyrant executing his colleagues, but nevertheless working on major issues in the general interests of the State—the sort of impression that films of the Stalin epoch tried to give of Ivan the Terrible. For Stalin's errors included failure to prepare the country for attack in 1941, with the result that Soviet system came within a hairsbreadth of destruction; the near-ruin of the country's agriculture; the disruption of international Communist unity in the Tito case; and (if we are to believe Khrushchev) the handing over the responsibility for the security of the State to a

gang of imperialist agents.

Marxists at odds with the Soviet rulers have defined Russian Communism as a state and economic form not foreseen, and arising through a peculiar aberration. Just as, they argue, Marx originally developed his theory of the forms of society without any reference to the Asiatic "form" of State (by allowing only slave, feudal, bourgeois and Socialist) but when faced with a social phenomenon he had not yet come across at once conceded the possibility of another form; so, they say, he would have described the USSR as a form of State capitalism arising in a country with an inadequate proletariat on the basis of a ruling bureaucracy enjoying the benefits of ownership though not officially vested with it. China he would have thought of as simply a quasi-military bureaucratic tyranny.

The Marxist analysis of social conditions in non-Communist society is sometimes reasonable enough. There are areas where the peasants really are oppressed by landlords and where capitalists, inadequately restrained by the State and without a tolerable sense of responsibility, sweat their workers and squeeze profits out of them. Any Party, like the Communist, which attacks these evils is bound to win a certain amount of support. But a bad system may be replaced either by a better or a worse one.

IS MARXISM A SCIENCE ?

THOUGH many of the predictions Marx made in his lifetime did not come off, as he frequently admitted, and though a number of the basic predictions he then made have failed to materialize since, one of the claims of Marxists is that they possess a "scientific" instrument capable of foretelling the results of political and social action.

Stalin said that "the power of the Marxist-Leninist theory lies in the fact that it enables the Party to find the right orientation in any situation, to understand the inner connection of current events, to foresee their course, and to perceive not only how they are developing in the present, but how and in what direction they are bound to develop in the future".

Lenin himself declared : "We Marxists have always been proud of the fact that by a strict analysis of the mass forces and mutual class relations we have been able to determine the expediency of this or that form of mass struggle". And this has remained good doctrine.

But in practice not only has the Party made mistakes of a truly colossal character, as is now admitted, but it is also true that different Marxists, even different Communists operating precisely the same "scientific" instrument of analysis, can reach two completely opposite conclusions.

Further, this claim to a special method of knowledge leads into the error of historicism—the notion that history is entirely determined. At its lowest this leads people to claim that the Russian Revolution, since it happened as

it did, happened according to some transcendental intervention of the Laws of History. Or, if Russia won the last war, or put up the earliest sputniks, that is attributed not to the chance results of battle, or to the accident of a particular success in military or scientific planning, but to the nature of the "Socialist" system.

But the fault goes further than this. For it produces the habit of mind by which men may think of themselves as the righteous executors of the will of history, and thus consider their opponents as not merely enemies but somehow sub-humans in the treatment of whom no qualms of conscience need apply. It is, therefore, both an intellectual and a moral perversion. It is the reverse of the habits of true science, which checks every step and is always on the look out for experiments not giving the expected results.

In particular, the view that the knowledge of the long-term interests of humanity is fully in one's possession makes one willing to sacrifice entire populations over the short term. All Stalin's massacres and oppressions were justified in his mind because he believed them necessary in the long run to produce "a good society." Thus a ruthless man's conscience may be at peace while he commits abominable crimes. The simple answer is that the future is hypothetical, the present sufferings are real.

Moreover, it can be easily shown that Communists' analysis of the supposedly class background of other political parties is not really based on a look at their economic or class backgrounds. In China, over the past thirty years, the *Kuomintang* has been officially analysed by the Communists on different occasions as :

(a) A coalition of bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and workers ;

(b) A coalition of petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and workers ;

(c) A coalition of petty bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie, and feudal classes ;

(d) Again a coalition of bourgeoisie, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and workers ;

(e) A coalition of bureaucratic capitalists and feudal elements.

During all this period the leadership of the KMT remained stable. And it is plain that in reality, though the KMT made use of the support of the various social classes at various times, it must itself be regarded to a large extent as an autonomous force not dependent upon other classes. The variations in Communist analysis merely reflect the degree of hostility or cooperation between the Communists and the KMT at any given time.

Even when the rather complicated Marxist analysis is applied to a given situation it clearly cannot provide final answers about the prospects of the Party's victory. That must depend to a very large extent upon, for example, the judgment of the Party's leadership as to which of the bourgeois elements of the revolution is, at a given moment, "wavering" and what is the right time to break with them.

It must also decide what measures are best adapted to gaining the leadership of the non-proletarian masses for the Party. In practice, though in highly stratified societies the class analysis may be of general use (and not only to Communists) it is clear that successful revolutions have depended very largely on the simple political intuition of the Communist leaders.

In general it may be said that with the exception of

Lenin, Tito and Mao Tse-tung, the estimates made by those leaders, from Stalin down to the heads of the Communist Parties in the various other countries, have been incorrect on almost all occasions. Even Lenin, in November, 1917, could not persuade his equally experienced colleagues (such as Zinoviev and Kamenev) that the time had come for the seizure of power. And Lenin himself erred considerably in, for example, his estimate of the Polish situation in 1920.

It was a peculiar, limited, dogmatic "Marxism" that the Communist Parties developed. But at least it was for a time a single, united doctrine. This gave it prestige. The policies of the Communists appeared, or could be thought to appear, to derive logically from their special views. Other political parties admitted to vagueness, indecision, empiricism. The Communists were "rigorous", "scientific."

But now the two main centres of Communist power, in Moscow and Peking, give totally different answers to all the main problems of our age. The theoreticians of the Chinese and Russian Communist Parties have long experience, long study and long discipline behind them, and they claim to be interpreting identically the same theories. Nor are they the only ones offering rival interpretations—the Yugoslavs have long been giving a third version, and there are variations in Italy, Hungary and elsewhere.

Plainly something is wrong. Plainly there is no truly established guide, no science of "Marxism-Leninism" to which appeal can confidently be made.

There are few historians or economists, however influential, whose followers, after a hundred years, still

think themselves "disciples". This is so, in fact, even in the true "sciences". It would probably not occur to a modern biologist to define himself as a Darwinian. He would, indeed, accept Darwin's theories as a basis. But so would virtually every other biologist.

A physicist would not call himself a Newtonian. This is not simply because there have been further developments since Newton; a physicist would not call himself a "Newtonian-Einsteinian" either. In so far as these theories are held, almost every physicist is indeed a Newtonian-Einsteinian, in some sense. Yet he thinks of himself simply as a physicist, accepting or rejecting hypotheses on their merits.

In one sphere there is a mysterious exception. Political and economic theorists refer to themselves as Marxists or Marxists-Leninists. But who would call himself a Marxist-Leninist if there were not other political thinkers to whom the term does not apply? In fact it is a confession that students of the matter as a whole have still not accepted these views.

Marx never claimed to be a final prophet. Indeed it is basic to his philosophy that new and unexpected qualitative changes might arise among phenomena—unforeseen events emerging as a result of chains of events which could be foreseen. The truly Marxist attitude to social phenomena might, with all the apocalyptic elements undoubtedly to be found in Marx, be described as he himself wished to describe it, as "scientific". That is to say, he never tried to pretened that events had gone as he had expected them twenty or thirty years previously.

He changed his own views on several points as the

result of experience. There is no reason to imagine that he would not have been thoroughly in accord with the normal practice of considering events for what they are, adapting and applying his theories accordingly in the present situation.

In so far as Marxists are not dogmatic, not simply addicted to the "comforts of unifying formulae", but really take the scientific attitude which they claim, they are facing the facts. And if the facts lead to a very considerable amendment or even abandonment of Marxist doctrines that is no more than Marx or any other social scientist could expect, and does not reflect on his power and usefulness any more than the abandonment of Newtonian physics reflects on Newton's. In fact willingness to face such a change is what might be expected to distinguish a follower from a mere cultist of Marx.

This is true in so far as Maxism is a scientific approach to history and sociology. For, of course, a theory may be scientific without being final. That is, it may appear to cover the facts up to a point, but further experiment may show that it is either untrue or inadequate. In such a case the scientist has few qualms in abandoning or modifying his theory accordingly. And in principle this might be expected to apply to Marxists too.

Of course it is a little unreal to treat the Marxist attitude as simply one of social and political theory. Marxism, as a coherent body of docrine, attracts belief and allegiance in a way which at least resembles those given to religious and other faiths. Marxism-Leninism, in particular, seems to seek the prestige of science without any genuine attachment to scientific principle or to the rational methods of scientific persuasion.

THE OTHER MARXISM AND THE FUTURE

EXCEPT for his economic work—which in any case remained uncompleted—Marx attempted no full-scale set-piece clarification of his views. Some of his conceptions—for example, the dictatorship of the proletariat (a term he only used three times)—are thus not very clearly defined, and in some of his writings they seem to bear a different connotation than in others. And in any case his views changed a good deal in certain respects. But even more important, there are in almost all his teachings two different and not easily reconcilable strands.

On the one hand he had ethical principles, believed in democracy, and above all stood for intellectual freedom in all circumstances; on the other, he was a practical Machiavellian and revolutionary—and revolution is, as he pointed out, an authoritarian as well as a violent act. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the absence of a coherent statement of his views on many points Marxists have been able to select what suited their own preconceptions.

What, in any case, is now occurring among thinking Marxists in the Communist countries is an attempt to get back to the more rational and human side of Marx's teaching and to break clear of the developments and interpretations which have produced tyranny and imperialism.

Marxist ethics, as in other fields of Marxism, have two aspects. On the one hand, Marx says that all moralities are "class moralities". On the other, he holds that moral progress has taken place; and at the same time he

does not himself urge complete moral relativism. On the contrary, he speaks flatly of "the simple laws of ethics and justice by which individuals must be guided in mutual relationships and which must be the supreme laws of conduct between States".

Lenin, and to an ever-increasing degree the Communists since his time, have taken the relativists' side, and ignored the basic ethics. Even in recent years any action that is supposedly in accord with "progress" has been undertaken with an easy conscience by everyone from the heads of Communist governments down to the lowliest torturer in the Secret Police.

Again, Marx's view of freedom of speech is blunt and clear. "The censored Press, a bad Press, remains bad, even when giving good products. A free Press remains good, even when giving bad products. A eunuch will always be an incomplete man, even if he had got a good voice. Nature remains good, even when giving birth to monsters. The characteristic of the censo red Press is that it is a flabby caricature without liberty, a civilised monster, a horror even though sprinkled with rosewater. The government hears only its own voice and demands from the people that they share the same illusion...."

And again "...boasting every day of everything created through the will of the government, this Press is constantly lying, since one day necessarily contradicts the other. And it reaches the point of not even being aware of its lies and losing all shame", (Marx : *Collected Works*, Vol. I).

Even one of the most revolutionary of Marxists, the Polish Communist heroine, Rosa Luxemburg, was able to say of revolutionary Russia, before her own murder by Right-wingers in 1919 :

"Freedom only for the supporters of the Government, only for the members of one Party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of 'justice' but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when 'freedom' becomes a special privilege....

"Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of Press and assembly, with a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading, and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders....

"Yes, we can go even further : such conditions must inevitably cause a brutalization of public life: attempted assassinations, shooting of hostages, etc." (Rosa Luxemburg: *The Russian Revolution*).

Such clear and basic ideas are beginning to penetrate the Communist movement as its more thoughtful members look on the still-smoking ruins of Stalin's horrible edifice of lies and terror. These "revisionists" look forward to restoring Communism to civilization, to a Marxism Marx might have recognised.

"Revisionism" is the term now used as the description of a not very clearly defined congeries of ideas within the Communist movement, regarded as heretical by Moscow as well as Peking (with the two governments yet using the term rather differently, for their own political purposes). Among this vague and inchoate flux of thought two characteristics are pre-eminent; the demand for freedom of thought and of speech and the demand for democracy within the parties and between the parties. As against this even the Khrushchevite Kremlin, which is sometimes thought of as "liberal", has made no concession at all. However its tactics vary it has never abandoned for a moment the principle of suppression of "hostile" thought or the effective claim of the Party *apparatchik* to rule by divine right.

As we have said, it is the merest accident that we think of the Soviet brand of Marxism as "orthodox." It represents, in reality, a sectarianism within a sectarianism, a splinter group. The chance that this was the trend to take power over a great State and a large apparatus of foreign missionaries and converts never made it respected among independent Marxist thinkers. Name a well-known Marxist philosopher, or political philosopher, and you name a heretic from the point of view of Stalin or Mao or Khrushchev.

"Revisionism" is, of course, a hostile term. From the point of view of the revisionists themselves, they are restoring a true Marxism which had in the meantime been "revised" by the Stalinists, theoreticians and *apparatchiks*. Moreover, the arguments they can produce on this, as on other themes, are powerful ones : too powerful in fact for the rulers to permit discussion of them.

There are two different, and indeed contrary, elements in revisionist thought. First, they take into account the

fact that certain of the Marxist predictions and provisions have proved false or inadequate or unsuitable. (This is also done, for their own purposes, by the *apparatchiks*, but it is then called not "revisionism" but "creative development.") Second, Marx's pronouncements contain a good deal that is totally destructive to Kremlin theory. The entire Russian revolution is undermined by his : "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed." More important still, Marx's stand for freedom of publication is fatal to any autocracy.

Theoretical argument is of particular psychological significance to the Russian bureaucracy. For without the justification and self-justifications provided by the Stalinist interpretation of Marxism they are naked to the cold blast of accusation that their real motives are power and self-interest.

One of the methods of the NKVD interrogators in Stalin's time was to convince the accused that they were "objectively" working against the interests of the proletariat, of future progress. One group, in respect of which this almost never succeeded in spite of physical and mental exhaustion, consisted of the highly trained Marxists of the anti-Bolshevik "Bund," who time and again broke their interrogators.

The power of a little Marxism, a modicum of theory, was seen in the brainwashing of prisoners in the Korean war. Prisoners of war who were both untrained in the type of argument and at the same time not imbued with an instinctive realisation that the method was meaningless often seemed to have their intelligence undermined. But this was about the only level at which Stalinism has been able to effect persuasion. Whenever a debate has taken

place among an intelligentsia with a modicum of Marxist knowledge, some sort of "revisionism" has triumphed.

"Either we destroy revisionism or revisionism will destroy us ; there is no third way" : this Soviet view reflects the extreme danger the Party leadership sees in the new Marxism. A spectre in fact is haunting the Communist world—"revisionism."

"Revisionism," it is true, suffered its military defeat in Budapest in 1956. But the liberalism which faced an earlier generation of legitimists was also stamped out in 1849 in the same battle zone ; yet the ideas were not destroyed by the military decision and were later to triumph.

Marxism started as a radical and revolutionary development of the humanist and rationalist tradition. Lenin, to some degree, and Stalin and Mao Tse-tung far more thoroughly, destroyed its true basis. Retaining only its vocabulary and its violence, they forced it into forms originally alien to it—thought control, autocracy and bad faith. This sort of Marxism is powerful still : even in the milder Russia of Khrushchev free argument and the free vote are totally unknown.

But the strength of this trend is based not on any living and persuasive school of thought, but on sheer State power. Meanwhile, the free Marxist thought within the Left-wing Socialist Parties and dissident Communist groups outside the Communist *bloc* have kept up free discussion, both within Marxism and with non-Marxists ; so Marx's living influence has not died.

And more recently, in the Communist *bloc* itself, the horrors and disasters produced by dogma have aroused many thinkers (whom the State had wished to limit to the position of mere theoretical advocates of its case) to a

desire to think independently. The conclusions they have been reaching over the last seven or eight years have often been suppressed, but whenever the State relaxes the show themselves again. They stand for a Marxism, and for a Communism, which would again play its role i world civilisation. They see Communism as we hav known it as a moral and intellectual dead end.

It is too early to say if their influence, which is simpl the voice of reason and humanity arising again in the dea pseudo-Marxism around them, will succeed in giving life t those countries. But if the crude dogmas of power retai their hold then in their death throes they may destroy us all.

One of the hopes of world peace, and of world freedom, is that an unaggressive and democratic "Communism" may prevail in the Soviet and Chinese *blocs*. We may agree or disagree with this Marxism : but we must hope for its reopening of a long-shut intellectual prison to the breezes of reason and humanity—to the possibility of progress, accepted by the independent minds of the intellectuals and by the free votes of the population, as Marx himself desired.

In any case, intellectual Marxists, if they are to expect any respect, can be counselled to accept the facts and adjust their theories to suit them. In this case they may continue to regard Marx's views as central to social analysis, and go on calling themselves Marxists ; or they may regard his analysis as a helpful component of a more broadly based method, and abandon the term.

In neither case would they need to forfeit any claim to intellectual integrity. The alternative is a relapse into blind and bullying dogmatism, replete with the threat of terror and of war.

THE AUTHOR

ROBERT CONQUEST

Robert Conque in the Army in the w ice 1956 he has divide ng in English literatu nd the U.S.

He is the author or of several antholog -European "thaw" poetry *Back to Life;* his books on Soviet politics include *Power and Policy in the USSR*, *Commonsense about Russia*, *Courage of Genius* (a study of the Pasternak affair), *The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* and *The Last Empire* (an Ampersand Book published in 1962).