

**COMMUNISM TODAY**

**2**

# **What Is Communism?**

By  
**Chinmohan Sehanobis**

**COMMUNIST PARTY PUBLICATION**

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## EDITORS' NOTE

After considerable delay, the second volume in our series sees the light. Shri Chinmohan Sehanobis, a veteran publicist and populariser of Marxism, has admirably presented the basic concepts of socialism and communism in a simple and accessible manner. It will help not only the uninitiated but also provide a model for those who want to popularise the grand ideas of communism.

We received some comments on Hiren Mukerjee's *Remembering Marx*. This helped us to plan future booklets. Comments on this volume may also be sent to the editorial board c/o Communist Party of India, 4/7 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 1.

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### Editorial Board:

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COMMUNISM, COMMUNIST, COMMUNIST PARTY—these words are freely used about these days. Whether we like it or not all of us have to reckon with these words. Turn over the pages of a paper any day and you find that somebody calls them good, someone else abuses, but none can possibly be altogether indifferent. For in the words of Tagore this indeed is 'the big news' of our age.

What is communism? Before we can decide if it is good or bad we have to find out what it actually is.

By communism we generally understand a particular *ideology* which has really gripped the world today. It is in this sense that we say that G. D. Birla does not believe in communism. Sometimes again this very word may denote a particular type of *society* or may also indicate a particular type of *movement*. For example, when we say the Soviet Union is now advancing towards full communism, we undoubtedly mean a particular type of society. Again when we say communism is quite strong in Kerala, we undoubtedly mean a particular type of movement.

Be that as it may, whatever we may mean by communism—whether an *ideology* or *society* or *movement*—it is certain that they are by no means isolated phenomena having no connection with one another. The communist movement is certainly guided by communist ideology and the aim of such a movement is to establish a communist society. Therefore, the particular ideology, movement and society that we understand by communism are integrally related to one another. For behind all these lies the same basic idea.

## AIM—END OF EXPLOITATION

What is this basic idea? In our language the word for communism is 'samyavad'. From this one may conclude that the main contention here is equality, the equality of all men. But is that really possible? As the saying goes even the five fingers of our hand are not of the same size. Some-one is tall, someone else short; somebody an idiot, someone else very clever; somebody may be weak, some other quite strong—this is how nature works. Can all things be made equal simply by wishing it?

No! Communism does not bring about a drab uniformity nor does it hold that such equality is possible. In point of fact what communism is out to abolish is social inequality, not inequality given in nature.

But why does one talk of establishing communism in order to abolish social inequality? After all, our Constitution has given equal rights to all even in our present society. For example, one has freedom of expression, the right to form an association or a party with like-minded people as also the right to go wherever one chooses. Why is it then necessary to establish communism in order to give everyone equal right or opportunity?

One point needs to be made here. No doubt our Constitution has given us all freedom of movement. Now suppose I want to go abroad very much or at least visit Kashmir, but I don't have the means to go from Calcutta even to Burdwan. In such circumstances will the equality of rights that the Constitution has provided to our citizens be of any use to me?

We may look at the other side, e.g., where law prevents everyone from doing something. For example, it is illegal to hawk wares on the pavements of Calcutta. From the vendor of 'chanachur', cut fruits or the obstinate shoe-shine boy to G. D. Birla himself nobody is immune from the provisions of law if he were to peddle things on the pavement!

The guardians of law will take him to the Lallbazar Police Station immediately, for all are equal in the eyes of law. But now let us think a little; where will the poor vendor of 'chanachur' go for peddling his trifles except the pavement and why must Birlaji, after all, take to selling the textiles of his Kesoram Cotton Mills in the streets of Calcutta! These examples help us to really understand the gap in the structure of the so-called equality under law.

It is the same story all over under the 'equality before law' in our present society—all men do not certainly obtain the same results, even though they have the same rights under the law. The equality of opportunity given by our Constitution actually yields unequal results due to dissimilar social circumstances.

That is why communism never stops only by saying that everybody must have equality of opportunity or right. In order that it really may be so it demands that *exploitation* must cease. This is so because a closer examination would reveal that behind every kind of social inequality lies *exploitation*—exploitation of the many by the few. High and low, rich and poor, want and abundance, poverty and prosperity—all such discrepancies are the very products of exploitation. It is due to this exploitation that the overwhelming majority in our society is deprived of the opportunity of developing their personalities freely.

**Hence to root out social inequality by ending all exploitation and to provide everyone with real equality of opportunity—this is the aim of communism.**

## THREE STAGES OF EXPLOITATION

But why do we talk of exploitation? Does exploitation exist only because there are the rich and the poor in our society. Does it necessarily mean that there is exploitation? If the poor man uses his muscles or his brains to get his

wages or salary, or the entire or a part of the product of his land, the rich similarly uses his capital or his land to secure profits or rent or a portion of the product of the land. Where is exploitation in all this?

In order to answer the question we have to examine first what we mean by exploitation. When a person forces or cheats another to pay ten times the proper price of the thing or manages things so that the other person sells his product at a far less than reasonable price, we say: 'What exploitation'! But unless we go a little deeper into the matter, we may never be able to find out the kind of exploitation that constantly and imperceptibly goes on in our society even when there is no obvious black-marketing or open forcible sale of merchandise at a rock-bottom price going on in the market.

Let us see at the very outset whether exploitation had existed throughout the ages. Scholars are in agreement that at the dawn of human history, man was an extremely helpless creature at the mercy of the mighty forces of nature. The only tool he had devised whereby he could somehow manage to eke out a precarious existence was a kind of sharp-edged stone knife. The primitive man of course did not move about on his own in the primordial forests with his stone knife or other simple tools to hunt or gather fruit. For with such primitive stone implements it was not possible for him to hunt even a small deer, not to speak of an elephant or a bison. Hence, even merely to survive man had to combine with other people to form a group which would collectively hunt or gather fruit for the entire group. Hence tools were never their own individual possessions—the group as a whole was the collective owner of these tools.

It is clear that, faced with want and insecurity and deprived of the bare necessities of life, it was not possible for anybody at that stage to stay idle. Even when they toiled day and night they could hardly manage to secure anything more than bare subsistence. In other words, there

was no surplus at that time in the society over and above the minimum necessary to keep body and soul together.

And because there was no surplus, there was no exploitation in society either. This is so because when a person could manage to secure by his labour at least something in excess of his bare subsistence, i.e., a little surplus, only then would arise the possibility of some other person depriving him of that surplus and living on his labour—that is exploiting him. Otherwise if there is an attempt to expropriate when there is no surplus the man will surely die and how can there be exploitation of a dead person? After all, you cannot kill the goose that lays golden eggs.

In primitive society there was no surplus and therefore no exploitation. And because there was no exploitation, there was no question of there being rich or poor. From the social point of view all were equal or equally poor in this primitive society. It is this society of equals based on scarcity that is known in history as *primitive communist society*.

Then through a long period over of many thousands of years, man learnt the art of domesticating animals, of pottery and later still the great art of tilling the soil. As a result, the problem of his securing a living became a little easier and it was now possible for him to produce a little surplus over and above what was required for a bare subsistence; and as soon as this surplus came into existence there arose the practical possibility of exploitation.

That is how things actually turned out. After this all the societies that have appeared in history one after the other, barring the recently developed socialist societies, are based on exploitation. The primitive communist society was one day replaced by a *slave society* where the slaves were exploited by their masters. They were as much the property of their master as the cattle or the plough and other agricultural implements. That is, just as the master had the right to sell or to kill the cattle if he so chose, he could

do the same with his slaves. But if the slaves are killed whom would the master exploit? So in order that the slaves could, like the cattle, go on labouring for their master, they had to be provided with some means of bare subsistence. They were also provided with a plot of land, agricultural implements or other raw materials for cultivation. And whatever the slaves produced by their back-breaking toil became the property of the master.

This was the state of affairs in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome. We also get some references to slavery in our ancient history. However, scholars still dispute among themselves the point whether our entire society depended on the toil of slaves, i.e., how widely was slavery practised as a system and whether it was the main system of production in our country.

Whatever that may be it is clear that exploitation in slave society was naked and shameless. A man was openly the property of another, a mere talking animal that belonged to another person.

After this, exactly as slave society had one day arisen in place of primitive communist society as an outcome of the improvement and refinement of man's tools, similarly through the further development of tools and its practical implementation the basis of slave society was later shaken and in the medieval age slavery was replaced by *feudalism*. This, of course, appeared in various forms in different countries—particularly Asian feudalism developed a character different from the European brand. Even then, in spite of all these differences, the main characteristics of feudal exploitation were as follows.

As there were masters and slaves under slavery, similarly in feudal society there were feudal landowners and serfs. But serfs were not the property of their feudal lords like the slaves; like them they could not be openly bought or sold in the market nor killed. But they could not leave the land to which they were tied without the permission

of the landlord. And if the feudal lord sold off his land or gave it away, serfs too were transferred to the new overlords. The serfs were, therefore called 'bhumidasa' or land slaves.

The serf used to work in the land owned by the landlord for a few days of the week without any remuneration. Whatever he produced there belonged exclusively to the landlord. The serf could not even get a small portion of that crop. Formerly the slave-holders bore the responsibility of providing them with the bare means of subsistence at the end of day. But the landlords did not do so in the case of their serfs. How could then the serfs manage to exist? They did so because they were allotted small plots of land. In between working free on the landlords' land, they tilled their own plots and it is from them that they somehow eked out a living.

In the feudal system free labour for a few days in the week in the landlord's land and labour for one's own subsistence on one's own plot of land—these two activities took place in two different places at two different times; hence there was no confusion as to what was exploitation and what was not. That is to say in this set-up also exploitation was quite open.

What do we find if we now turn our eyes to our own familiar *capitalist system*? It is this that there also exploitation exists but its character is not like that of slavery or feudal society. In this system on the one side there are the capitalists. They are the owners of the factories, mines, banks, etc. On the other side are the workers. They are certainly not the property of the capitalists as slaves were of their master; nor are they tied to the land like the serfs of the middle ages. If it does not suit them they are free to leave their jobs in one factory and go to another. On all these scores they enjoy much more freedom.

But this freedom or right is limited more or less to the statute book only. Because in reality the worker cannot

subsist without working like his capitalist master. That is why he must seek employment from the capitalists for his living. He may not be tied to a particular capitalist, but is tied to the capitalist class as a whole. For if he cannot find employment under one capitalist or another he cannot earn his bread. In other words he may not be a slave or a serf but in reality he is a wage-slave all the same. And because the capitalists control the factories and industries, they can easily make the workers work in their factories and appropriate to themselves the outcome thereof. Such is the character of exploitation in the capitalist society.

After all the capitalists pay the workers their wages in exchange for their labour. Where then does exploitation come in? It consists in this that of the entire period that the worker works in a factory his wages are actually covered only by a few hours' labour. And in the remaining few hours whatever surplus he produces goes into the pocket of the owner of the factory. In other words, the worker sells his labour-power covering the entire period of time that he works in the factory, but he gets the price of only a part of his labour as his wages. Hence the worker or an employee does not certainly enjoy the full fruit of labour. On the contrary, the lion's share goes into the pocket of the capitalist owner.

It may be said that this is a very funny argument! The capitalist has invested his money—then why should he not realise what is due to him! Where does exploitation come in? But then the old slave-owner or the feudal lord could also argue along the same lines against all charges of exploitation. He too had paid for the slave in the market or for a piece of land along with the serfs, at the end of the day he had even given some food to the slave or granted a plot of land to the serf for his upkeep—then why charge him with exploitation if he takes hold of the crop raised in his own land? What sort of talk is this?

The point is that today we can appreciate the character

of exploitation in ancient or medieval times but are often unable to spot its current variant in our day. It is not only because we have come to accept such exploitation as a part of our daily life. It is also because of the fact that the workers at the factory are not exploited openly like the slaves or the serfs. Exploitation in their case is much more subtle and concealed. This is because a worker is not the property of another man like a slave nor is he tied hand and foot to a piece of land like a serf. He enjoys real legal right to choose his master, to leave one and go to another if he so wishes. Moreover, his labour both for his own sustenance and that for his boss is one continuous process taking place simultaneously at the same plant. As a result, we get the wrong impression that the worker is working entirely at his own sweet will at the factory and gets the full price of this labour as wages at the end of the day. But what escapes us in this is that though the worker is not tied to any particular capitalist, he in fact is tied to the capitalist class as a whole. His legal right to go away anywhere he pleases is merely nominal. As a matter of fact, he is a wage-slave. It also escapes our notice that out of the total hours of labour that the worker puts in at the factory he works gratis for the capitalist a few hours and the remuneration he receives in the form of wages does not certainly pay for the entire labour that he has put in. It is rather like the few morsels of food the slave used to get at the end of a day of toil for his sustenance.

There is one more point. Wherefrom does the capital come which the capitalist invested in return for which he claims his profit? We all know the answer. When you add to the capital invested in the factory the labour-power of the workers, you get a whole number of products. One portion of this is directly consumed while the other part constitutes the raw materials and machinery to build up a new factory or renovate the old one. In other words the latter is converted into new capital. From this it follows

that if there is somehow a supply of the initial capital, it can be constantly replenished by man's labour. But the point is—how did the initial capital, with the help of which the workers could later open up the path to continuous creation of further capital, come in those early days?

History tells us that it was England which first gave birth to capitalist society. The question then arises—from where did the first English capitalists acquire their primitive capital? History also answers this question—that capital came from the open or undercover (so-called trade) looting of weak countries like ours, from raids on Spanish ships loaded with gold in mid-ocean and through pauperisation of thousands and thousands of peasants and village artisans of England under the cover of law. In other words, it was on the basis of large-scale looting of the people at home and abroad that the wheels of the English factories were enabled to turn. And it was those pauperised English peasants and village artisans who found their way into those factories as workers.

We who have at last gained our independence after two hundred years of foreign domination, no doubt, know it in our very bones whether capitalist exploitation exists or not. For, colonial exploitation to which we were subjected so long is in reality the extreme form of that capitalist exploitation. The peculiar characteristics of this colonial exploitation is that firstly, at this stage of development of capitalism it is the big monopolies who engulf numerous small industries and trade and become dominant in society. Secondly, these monopolies have the backing of big capital behind them—which arises out of fusion of banking and industrial capital (this is known as finance capital). Thirdly, owners of these huge monopoly concerns not only exploit the people of their own country but also export capital particularly to weak and other dependent countries in search for higher profit. This is how a new kind of empire comes into existence. The idea of exporting capital abroad

is certainly not to help develop industry in those countries. The aim is to exploit ruthlessly the local cheap labour and take advantage of cheap raw materials there, to open up tea-gardens or coal mines or, at best, to build light industries like jute and cotton factories and extract maximum profit out of them. It is for this that the imperialist capitalists want to keep the dependent countries backward and mainly agricultural and do their very best to obstruct the independent economic development of these countries. Fourthly, big monopolies of various countries try to divide the world market by agreement among themselves and build up giant international business concerns called cartels. But sometimes it does not work out. And so, lastly, when a dispute arises between different imperialist countries as to which of them will exploit which country, a terrible calamity occurs. The imperialists of different countries start quarrelling among themselves and this quarrel ultimately leads to war. That is to say behind the wars of our age lies imperialist exploitation. Now we can sum up what we have learnt in this section as follows:

**Society has not always been divided into the rich and the poor. In primitive society all were equal or rather all were equally poor. That society produced no surplus. And because there was no surplus, there was no exploitation either.**

**Only when a surplus started being produced as a result of improved methods of production that there was an effort on the part of some to appropriate a part of this surplus produced by others. This was the beginning of exploitation. After primitive communist society there arose three systems based on exploitation—slavery, feudalism and capitalism—one after the other. Exploitation was common in all these three forms of society. However, unlike the first two, the nature of exploitation in capitalist society is not open, but concealed and subtle. There also it is the capitalists who enjoy the lion's share of the fruits of labour**



**of the working class. That is, they exploit the workers. The extreme form of this capitalist exploitation is imperialist exploitation.**

#### IS ABOLITION OF ALL OWNERSHIP NECESSARY?

But how to end exploitation? In order to achieve that does communism want to abolish all kinds of ownership of property? Does it follow that under communism no man will be able to claim anything as his own?

Such a proposition will not only terrify the rich but undoubtedly all types of men will be antagonised at such an atrocious suggestion.

In reality, however, communism does not stand for the indiscriminate abolition of all types of ownership of property, nor does it want to snatch away the last shirt from the back of the ordinary man in the street. On the contrary, communism may be said to staunchly support ownership of property of a kind. Since this may appear a little astonishing to some people let us discuss this point a little more deeply.

Ownership is of two kinds in our society: first consumption goods like food, clothing, furniture and such other things of daily use. These are meant directly for our consumption. Secondly, factories, land, mines, forests, etc. which man cannot directly consume, but without which the supply of various consumption goods will cease in our society. For these are the means for producing things of consumption. That is why we call them simply 'production goods'.

Now if communism stands for the end of exploitation, does it follow that we have to abolish both these types of ownership? We have seen that the essence of capitalist exploitation is the exploitation of workers by capitalists. But how is the capitalist able to exploit the workers? This

is because capitalists are the owners of those means of production which produce wealth. It is because of this ownership of factories and other means of production that capitalists are able to make the workers labour under them. Therefore, behind exploitation lies the private ownership of these means of production.

So in order to end exploitation we can never allow private ownership of the means of production; these have to be taken over from individual ownership to collective ownership of the whole society. This is precisely what communists want to do.

But each one of us is the owner of certain things which are used directly for consumption. These we consume or use for the satisfaction of our needs—for food, clothing, shelter, etc. Does it follow that the use of machinery by capitalists and the use of such articles of consumption by an ordinary man are similar? Certainly not. For the very use of machinery by the capitalists can only mean the deprivation of others of their fruits of labour, which they put in at the plant. But can we really hold that even when one uses consumption goods like food and clothing that one is exploiting the labour of others? Certainly not. Therefore, in this case the question of exploitation does not arise nor do we have any need for putting an end to this type of ownership; on the contrary, communism wants to bring about a state of affairs in which all men may become owners of 'property' of this type, for this can lead to a happy, healthy and prosperous life for them.

And for this very reason that everybody may eat well, be clothed properly, have proper education and culture and, thus, become happy that communism wants to take over the means of production under social ownership. It is clear that in our society it is precisely because these production goods belong to individuals that we have the present sorry state of affairs. Is it not clear that the only aim of running factories in our society is not to bring happiness

and comfort to the many but to fetch high profit to their owners?

**Therefore, communism is dead set against individual ownership of the means of production, its aim is to expropriate them. As for consumption goods communism wants that no one is deprived of his regular and adequate supply. On the contrary, it wants that through the increasing supply of such consumption goods life becomes richer in all aspects for all men in our society.**

#### COMMUNISM AND SMALL PROPERTY OWNERS

The position regarding consumption goods is, perhaps, clear by now. But what will happen to the small plots of land owned by the peasants, the small business owned by the shopkeepers, the small traders or the anvil, the hammer, the spinning wheel of the artisan? Does communism want to abolish private property in this sphere also?

Let us be clear at the very outset about one thing. No doubt, exploitation can only be ended by expropriating that sector of private ownership which in particular leads to a high degree of expropriation of surplus. But where a peasant or a shopkeeper or an artisan creates wealth mainly by dint of his own labour or that of the members of his family, the question of exploitation does not arise or is, at most, very insignificant. On the contrary, all peasants suffer oppression at the hands of the zamindar and the mahajan; the small trader and the handicraftsmen find it difficult to survive faced with competition from giant business concerns and factories. So the small owners of small units of production are really exploited at every stage. Not only they but in independent or newly-independent but underdeveloped countries like ours even some of the capitalists themselves who are not large monopolists like Birla or Tata are harassed at every stage by the machinations of the foreign imperialists and the Indian monopolists in spite of the fact that they themselves are exploiters.

So in order to end exploitation communism holds that *in the field of industry* the process of socialisation has to start first with the large factories, big trading concerns, banks, transport, etc. and in the case of dependent or newly-independent but backward countries, we have first to take over the foreign imperialist concerns as well as the native monopolies. This is because the root of the exploitation of society lies here, and, therefore, we can never allow private ownership of the means of production in this sphere. When these come under social ownership, society as a whole secures such a powerful weapon in its hands that even with a small sector of private ownership of the means of production existing elsewhere the stranglehold of exploitation is loosened to a very large extent. The total production of wealth in the country is also increased manifold and everybody gains as a result. Of course, all this is possible only when the leadership of the country is in the hands of the common man. This point we shall discuss later.

And *in the field of agriculture*, communism starts by giving land to the peasants, particularly the poor peasants and the landless labourers (i.e., to the real tillers of the soil) by taking over the land belonging to the landlords. In today's society the majority of the peasants, particularly in underdeveloped countries like ours, suffers untold misery and privation generation after generation. This condition will be substantially improved if land could be handed over to the tillers of the soil. When that is accomplished the peasants enthusiastically try to raise maximum crop in their respective plots of land without the fear of an uncertain future. Of course, if production is to be really raised, this alone will not do. For that scientific farming is essential. But it is not possible to adopt scientific methods of cultivation in fragmented, scattered plots of land. So the peasants through their own experience will gradually come to realise that it is not possible to make big advances in

agricultural production by recourse to this small individualistic mode of production. Only then will they try to build at first temporary and then permanent organs of cooperation at sowing or harvesting time or at other stages. They will lean more and more on building cooperatives and collective farms. And when their education and culture attain a sufficiently high level, they will not perhaps object to even handing over their individual small plots of land to the cooperatives or collective farms for real large-scale scientific farming. (Even then they may, perhaps, be allowed to keep as private property small backyard kitchen-gardens where they can by their own labour or by the labour of their family members raise vegetables, etc. for their dinner table.) Then they will go on to realise through their personal experience that by introducing the scientific method of cultivation the interest of the individual and of his family will not suffer at all. On the contrary as a result of a manifold increase in production the individual share of each will also increase. What is important to remember in this context is that the peasants will advance along this path *voluntarily* on the basis of their own experience and not under any compulsion.

More or less the same thing will happen in the case of small business and cottage industries. Surely there is no question here of abolishing these concerns by legislative measures. But, of course, we know now what competition these small concerns face from the monopolist owners. So their future too lies in building cooperatives. For in the cooperatives the small owners' interest will certainly not be affected, and through them they can get the guarantee for regular supply of raw materials at a reasonable price and marketing facilities for their products which they demand from the government. Here also the whole thing must take place on a *voluntary basis* and through the *direct personal experience* of these small owners.

And in independent but underdeveloped countries like

ours, communism does not generally stand for the indiscriminate appropriation of the factories or proprietary concerns belonging to all the indigenous capitalists. Of course, the case would be different in the case of the monopolists or particular owners whose actions are consistently inimical to the country's interests. In such circumstances, steps will certainly be taken against them not because they happen to belong to the capitalist class, but because they are traitors. All others will be allowed to run their factories or their business concerns as the main problem here is one of developing as quickly as possible the national wealth.

The capitalists will not, however, be allowed in the new set-up to have a free run of their factories or business concerns without caring for the welfare of the ordinary people. Not only will blackmarketing be severely dealt with, but trade-union demands will have to be met by the capitalists. And, lastly, they will have to work within the confines of a broad national plan in the field of production which the state will draw up in the interest of the entire nation. The capitalists will have to accept these interests of the entire nation and this new outlook will help them to look upon the job of a director or a manager in a state-owned nationalised concern as a matter of greater honour than personal proprietorship of a firm. No doubt, they must qualify for this job of a director or a manager in a nationalised concern. And it may even be possible to allow certain amount of a compensation while taking over such concerns.

**So in developed capitalist countries communism proposes to take over all big factories, trading houses, transport and other public utility concerns, mines and banks. In newly-independent but underdeveloped countries the immediate aim of communism is to bring under social ownership the factories, trading concerns, mines, etc. belonging to the foreign imperialists and monopolies and to distribute the land belonging to the landlords among the peasants.**

**And then as the country advances materially and culturally the peasants, shopkeepers, artisans and even the patriotic nonmonopoly capitalists in these newly-independent but underdeveloped countries will come to accept through their own experience and education the necessity for building cooperatives or nationalising their own concerns. This they will do, because it is in their own interests to accept this position. Under this new dispensation the total production of wealth will increase manifold and even the patriotic capitalists will gain along with other sections of the population.**

#### CLASS STRUGGLE—THE PATH TO COMMUNISM

Now how will the society be able to expropriate the means of production from its present individual ownership? Which path will lead to the establishment of communism?

Many would reply that the thing which really matters here is man's mind. It is there that vices like greed and violence have found their abode. Therefore, we could explain the necessity of communism through proper education and propaganda, then the rich would give away their property voluntarily. And the poor also will no longer take recourse to the evil path of violence. As a result, exploitation will cease without any trouble and communism will be established without tears or bloodshed.

No doubt man's genuine good will has often been expressed through such sentiments. Nearly two and a half thousand years ago Lord Buddha indicated such a path for mankind in his own way by declaring himself in favour of the greatest good for the greatest number. After him prophets like Christ, Muhammed, Chaitanya, Kabir and Nanak, social thinkers like Robert Owen of England, Saint Simon and Fourier of France, people's leaders like Gandhiji down to Vinoba Bhave have all more or less suggested the same kind of thing in diverse ways. Even then exploitation has

not ended. On the contrary, it has become even more thorough-going and remorseless.

Why is it that such sincere efforts and genuine desire to do good to mankind has not so far been successful? It is because sincerity and good will alone are not enough to bring about the real well being of mankind. It is necessary to get the backing of history behind all such efforts. In other words, man must know properly his history and his society, the laws of social change and determine his practical programme accordingly. Only then this desire to do good to mankind can bear fruit. Otherwise, even the messages of the great ones will fail if not based on history and social reality.

If we were to read man's history without any preconceived notions we will come across this broad basic truth underlying an infinite diversity of events and happenings. It is this, that man must find food, shelter and other basic necessities, i.e., he must live before he can pursue science and philosophy, get absorbed in art and literature, lose himself in religious meditation or create wonders in the field of culture and thought. In reality it is on the basis of the day-to-day mundane existence of man that the lofty superstructure of his mental life is raised.

If we were to deny this basic truth about man and his society and yet think of doing good to mankind, such an effort is bound to be fruitless. And only when we adopt a practical programme of action and a system of thought on the basis of these facts of social life, that we may attain success. So we must at the very outset get at the basic reality of social life.

We have seen that the most primitive society of man was a kind of communism. Since then there have been three different types of society and if we look well we will notice a common trait in all the three. In none of them is the social base really strong because there is no unity or harmony in that base. On the contrary, there is intense strife

there. Why is there no unity? Because society is based on exploitation. And among whom does the strife exist? Between the exploiter and the exploited. Who are the exploiters? Those who are the owners of the means of production. And the exploited are those who are deprived of such ownership and as a result they have to work for the exploiters. Hence, the interests of the exploiters and the exploited are contradictory and they have of necessity to come to a clash. It is this struggle and contradiction between the exploiter and the exploited that manifest itself in history in all the three stages of social development, sometimes rather sluggishly, sometimes very intensely, sometimes openly and sometimes as an undercurrent. In ancient times the slaves clashed with their masters, in the medieval age the serfs with the landlords and in recent times the workers or wage-slaves with the capitalist class.

This is class struggle.

We do not mean by *class* just any kind of a conglomeration of men. Thus, there is no such thing as a class of men and a class of women, a brahmin class as opposed to a sudra class, a class of Englishmen and a class of Indians or a Punjabi class as opposed to a Bengali class. Even expressions like the rich and poor classes though commonly used are not strictly speaking correct. How then is a class to be determined? By the following criteria: Who owns the means of production? Is there any individual ownership of the means of production? What is the individual's relation to such means of production? It is by these criteria that we can say that a man is either a master or a slave, a landlord or a serf, a capitalist or a worker, a peasant or a petty bourgeoisie.

Therefore, a little closer look at history will reveal that class struggle has been the main lever in history for the last two thousand years, i.e., since the time when exploitation came into existence after the downfall of primitive communist society. We say this is the main event because behind

all the big changes in society lies this class struggle. We have already seen that the tools which produce wealth tend to improve with time. In place of the uncertainty in hunting or food gathering came gradually the domestication of animals, pottery, cottage and other small industries. And then man went on to develop steam power, build large factories, generate electricity and very recently atomic energy. And to keep pace with this increasing improvement of tools, the structure of society has also changed from time to time through a process of class struggle. In other words, the relations between different classes have also changed radically. The class, which as the owners of the means of production had so long been carrying on exploitation and domination, is replaced by another and the new class as the leader of the intense class struggle in its turn becomes dominant in the society and brings about a change in the mode of production. As a result, a new relation between classes grows up in no time within this new society. The economic, political and cultural basis, even the very thoughts and ideology of man change radically, i.e., the whole of society changes its character. This radical change in the character of society as a result of class struggle through which power is transferred from one class to another and the fetters of production are at last shattered—that is what is called *revolution*.

Thus, it is through class struggle that the ancient slave society was once transformed into feudalism and feudalism changed into capitalism in comparatively recent times. What has to be noted here is that these revolutions did not take place as a result of the subjective design of one or a few leaders. Revolution takes place only when the increased improvement of the productive forces can no longer be confined within the limits of the old set-up, i.e., when the relation which so long existed between different classes can no longer be kept on the old basis. In other words, only when social transformation becomes inevitable due to objective conditions is revolution possible. For example, the

do's and don't's, the various taboos which once governed the norms of behaviour in feudal society, became in course of time a hindrance to the development of worldwide trade, working of the new machinery, steam power and big factories. As a result class struggle assumed an extreme form for the removal of the discrepancy in social set-up and smashed the very citadels of feudalism. And capitalism was installed instead.

It is clear that capitalist society itself has now reached a point of no return. There are, of course, a few in this society who have no limits to their wealth. But side by side, the life of the majority of the people under capitalism is constantly plagued by retrenchment, unemployment, want and continuous financial difficulty. Alongside the comparatively advanced standard of life in imperialist countries like Britain or the USA are the crores and crores of people in the underdeveloped countries dependent on them, who spend their whole life in starvation, malnutrition and other tribulations and thereby help augment the high profits of the imperialists. But this is not the whole story. When the imperialists sometimes fight among themselves for the re-division of their empires and take recourse to war the sufferings of the ordinary people reach the limit and they become victims of imperialist interests and greed.

It is evident from all this that though science has been able to release immense sources of power and energy for mankind—particularly after the discovery of atomic energy—capitalism does not have the capacity to utilise them. The energy if applied to the task of the all-round well being of the entire mankind could surely produce unimaginable wealth. This has not been possible so far because of the many obstacles arising out of the narrow profit motives of the capitalists. Not only that. That very energy which was made to serve the narrow interests of a few rich capitalist circles of the imperialist countries has now appeared as the monster of thermonuclear destruction

hanging like sword of Damocle over the whole of mankind.

Man today is at the cross-roads—will it be total destruction or the total transformation of society? None can possibly escape the alternatives. Two things emerge clearly out of this. First, the idea of social transformation, i.e., the building up of a communist society is not a pipe-dream of any person. It is social reality today that makes inevitable social transformation and the rise of communism. Nearly a hundred crores of people in fourteen different countries have already brought about such a transformation. The remaining section of humanity is also advancing in the same direction—maybe through a circuitous path or even directly; but their advance is steady and inevitable.

Secondly, this time also the social transformation is taking place through intense class struggle. Not merely the experience of those fourteen countries, but the developing struggle all over the world only goes to prove the correctness of the above.

**The transformation of capitalist society and the establishment of communism will take place not by bringing about a change of heart of the rich but through class struggle, through a revolution.**

#### LEADER AND ALLIES OF CLASS STRUGGLE

But who will be the leader of that class struggle, the main instrument of social transformation or revolution in our age? And who are the allies?

We have seen that in capitalist society the main class struggle is between the capitalists and the workers. And by workers we mean all who live by their labour and who do not own any means of production. Not only those who work on the machines directly, but clerks, teachers, NGOs, etc. are also workers though white-collared ones. The capitalists are the owners of the means of production and they are able to exploit others on the basis of that ownership.

And even though the workers are the real creators or producers of wealth in this society, they are not the owners of the means of producing wealth. As a result, the capitalists usurp the fruits of the workers' labour. By his very work the worker is exploited directly by the capitalists and comes into direct clash with him.

The workers cannot naturally accept this state of affairs. This not only causes their sad lot for the present, but, if allowed to continue, will never bring them happiness in the future also. This is why the workers are not interested in perpetuating this state of affairs. On the contrary, it is precisely because capitalism brings untold misery, humiliation and oppression in their life and ultimately pushes them towards the holocaust of war that it is natural for the workers to resist it. When the workers gradually adopt a militant attitude in this class struggle, they never vacillate or look back. Then they fight against capitalism with desperate zeal. For they gradually come to accept the fact that they have nothing to lose in this struggle, but if victorious they will be liberated from the bonds of wage-slavery. This is why the workers are dead set against capitalism and it is they who constitute the leadership of the revolutionary forces.

One question may arise. Are there not other classes besides the workers and capitalists in the society? In most of the countries the peasants are, in fact, more numerous than the workers. Many of the peasants are surely much more impoverished than even the average worker. Out of the 35 lakhs of people who lost their lives in the Bengal famine of 1943, the majority were peasants or village artisans. The middle classes also suffer untold privations from retrenchment, unemployment and high prices of essential articles. Many of them enjoy no better standard of life than the average worker. The number of educated people among the middle class is the highest and many of them keep themselves well abreast of things happening in the world.

So why should the workers be the leader of the revolution instead of the peasants or the middle class?

This is because even though the peasants or the middle class are also exploited, they are usually owners of small properties or they have lost their properties only recently. Some of them may even own a few plots of land, or have a few shares in some joint-stock companies. Those who own these small properties or who have just been expropriated naturally nurse a faint hope within them that maybe with a little luck one day they will regain their property. Hence, in course of the intense struggle against the intolerable conditions prevailing under capitalism, they sometimes show a certain amount of vacillation because of their ties with land or property or even of their past memories. Like the workers they are not totally disillusioned about capitalism.

The workers are also associated with the most advanced scientific technique in production which takes place in large factories. The peasants, on the contrary, are engaged in agricultural production on small plots of land, adopting very often backward and unscientific methods. Hence judged from the standpoint of future progress, it is the workers who form the vanguard of the society.

One more thing. In many of the countries, in fact in all the countries except the most industrially advanced ones, the workers are numerically less than the peasants or the middle class; but many of the latter classes daily get impoverished and destitute and ultimately join the ranks of the working class. Of course, a very small section of the two classes may also rise up the social ladder. However their number is extremely small. The net result is that the number of workers in society is increasing day by day and the peasants and the middle class quantitatively decrease in the same proportion. So in contrast to the peasants and the middle class, the working class though relatively small is

increasingly growing in number. The very development of capitalism brings this about. It is an objective law.

Lastly, the workers work in large factories in hundreds and thousands, and they live in the cities as a community in the chawls and bustees. It is this collective work and life which help to bring a sense of solidarity and unity among them and make it easy for them to be organised. On the other hand, the peasants work separately on small isolated plots of land and live in their own cottages or huts. It is, therefore, somewhat difficult for the peasants to forge *solid* unity and solidarity among themselves.

Hence, from these considerations, it is the workers who form the leading force of the revolution. This, of course, does not mean that they need make no effort to earn this glory, that they are automatically revolutionaries just because they happen to belong to the working class. This is certainly not true, specially in a country like India. This is because some of the workers in our country still retain a few small plots of land back in their native villages where they came from. Most of them work in small factories in fives and tens rather than hundreds or thousands. Almost all have a poor education and live in a backward and conservative atmosphere. So unlike their brothers in developed countries they cannot spontaneously become revolutionaries. They will have to overcome old conservative ideas and acquire revolutionary knowledge mainly through their own efforts and through such knowledge forge unity among themselves and with all other sections of oppressed humanity. When we say that workers are the leading force of the revolution, we only mean that in comparison with other classes they have a certain natural advantage in this regard. Their very way of life and work inevitably push them towards struggle and unity.

But even though the workers constitute the main leadership of the revolution, they are by no means alone in the fight. We know that the peasants and the middle class are

also victims of extreme oppression and exploitation in this society, and they also have glorious revolutionary traditions in the fight against oppression. So in the battle for the transformation of society they are strong allies of the workers. In newly-independent but underdeveloped countries like ours, even the national bourgeoisie may be helpful in this struggle to some extent because imperialism and feudalism block their advance also at every step.

So when the working class is pitted against the capitalists in the class struggle, it not only looks to its own interests, but mobilises all the other oppressed sections in society in one front to build up a mighty mass movement of the overwhelming majority of society. The aim of such a movement is total transformation of society.

The workers, of course, do not acquire the skill for leadership of such a movement overnight. At the beginning, the class struggle may assume a somewhat disjointed and even elemental character almost as a natural calamity. After such a beginning, as the class struggle advances and the working class acquires fresh experience and imbibes revolutionary theory with great effort, its class consciousness becomes sharper and clearer; and instead of the spontaneous vanguardist forms of struggle, there appear more and more well-organised and powerful labour movements. At first it builds up *trade unions* for realising its economic demands and later on it organises its *political party* with communism as its goal. This how the struggle of the working class gets organised, consolidated and powerful.

**In capitalist society as a whole the leader and main force of the class struggle are the working class. The peasants and the middle class are close allies of the working class in this struggle. In dependent and newly-independent but underdeveloped countries, even the patriotic sections of the bourgeoisie may become under the leadership of the working class a temporary ally in this fight for social transformation.**



## CLASS STRUGGLE — A SOCIAL REALITY

But does it follow that communism wants to impose a class struggle in our society?

It is certainly a rather amusing idea, for when was communism as a more or less worked-out concept born? To count the years from the date of publication of *Communist Manifesto* it will be little over a century. Yet if we are to leave out the first phase of man's history—really his pre-history—we find that class struggle has been going on for the last few thousand years continuously in every country, through many vicissitudes, sometimes openly, sometimes under cover, at times in rapid strides, at others at a slow pace. Therefore, to suggest that a particular ideology which was only born a little more than a century ago can introduce the phenomenon of class struggle, which has been continuing in society for the last so many thousand years, is quite untenable.

No doubt it is true that communism does not want to hide this blatant reality of class struggle behind sugar-coated words, nor does it complain that class struggle is something which is very regrettable. Communism accepts class struggle as a social reality and directs class struggle towards realising its aims.

One question is relevant in this connection—what would be the position of classes under communism? Will class struggle still continue under communism as it does today? We have seen that exploitation means the appropriation of the fruits of labour of some persons by others on the basis of the ownership of the means of production. And the existence of the exploiter and exploited classes depends on that exploitation. We also know that the working class as the leader of the society under communism does not introduce a new kind of exploitation in the society. What it does is to take the means of production from private hands and

transform them into social ownership and thereby abolish exploitation altogether. Hence in that society, only the workers and peasants exist as classes. But their relation is certainly not antagonistic like the one between the exploiter and the exploited, but one of a very friendly character. Of course, the old exploiters and former rulers do not easily give up the struggle because they have lost their property and their capacity to carry on exploitation. On the contrary, they try their utmost to bring back the old system of exploitation. The capitalists of other countries also help them in this regard. Hence, class struggle does not cease with the ending of the system of exploitation, the capitalists at home and abroad try to keep it going by all means.

Not only this, there is likely to be some remnants of old ideas even after the rule of exploitation is overthrown—particularly among the peasants as they are the owners of a certain amount of property, however small. And these ideas do not go immediately with the abolition of the system of exploitation. On the contrary, they constantly come into clash with the new ideas corresponding to the new society. In a sense, this also is a kind of class struggle.

Now, the more the new and old instruments of production get socialised and thereby help to strengthen the basis of a new society, and the more the spread of communism all over the world makes foreign intervention in the internal affairs of any country impossible, the more quickly the last remnants of exploitation will disappear from society. And new human beings also arise in increasing numbers imbued with a new outlook corresponding to the new set-up. As communism advances even the difference between town and country will get obliterated (the relationship was often that of the exploiter and the exploited in the old society) and both in industry and agriculture the same kind of social property will begin to prevail. Correspondingly the worker and the peasant united in close alliance in building up communism will begin to lose their distinctive characters

and merge. In other words, communism will ultimately blossom into a fullfledged classless society. As there can be no question of a headache without a head, the very idea of class struggle in a society where class differences just do not exist would be pure fiction.

**So communism by no means imports the conception of class struggle into society; it only recognises class struggle as a matter of social reality and tries to direct it towards the goal of communism. In fact, by abolishing the system of exploitation in society communism makes it inevitable that struggle and class differences also cease once for all. Classes are abolished through class struggle.**

### NOT VIOLENCE BUT UPROOTING THE VERY BASIS OF VIOLENCE

But does not the acceptance of the reality of class struggle mean that communism believes in violence, bloodshed and ruthless coercion?

This is certainly not true either from the point of view of the goal or the path of communism. We have already discussed a little about the aim of communism. Let us look at it a little more closely.

Communism holds that behind almost every kind of violence or coercion that goes on in society lies the system of exploitation, that the system which exists in the majority of the countries of the world as a result of private ownership of the means of production itself breeds violence. In reality, this is not a question of a personal predilection or failing. It is possible that a particular capitalist may be very amicable in his disposition towards workers. He may even be very kind or god-fearing in his personal behaviour, instead of believing in violence and bloodshed. Even then, since he enjoys the fruits of labour of others on the strength of private ownership of the means of production, he cannot under any circumstances be free from the taint of

exploitation. Here, violence is certainly concealed, but behind this undercover and almost concealed violence will be found all the social evils—coercion; even suppression and oppression; imperialists' beastly struggle among themselves over markets for superprofits; the strife between man and man, class and class, nation and nation and ultimately a world war.

We normally fail to notice the violence that is hidden behind capitalist exploitation. Similarly, the violence arising out of the institution known as the state is also such a daily occurrence, that we sometimes wrongly think that the state must be impartial. The various organs of the state, viz., the army, police, bureaucracy, law and judiciary, are taken for granted and it is impossible for us to think that society could survive even for a day without them. And yet the primitive man was certainly not born with all these army, police and bureaucracy all complete. The facts that have so far been collected about the primitive tribes and communities which existed and still exist in different regions of the world lead us to the conclusion that the primitive society was not only a society free from exploitation and class differences but also without a state. And this was not an accidental happening in history either. Scholars have proved, after a very long painstaking research, that the institution which we today know as the state arose at a later stage, precisely at the stage when exploitation came into existence in society. They have concluded from this that in order to suppress the exploited the exploiters required a state which looked after legal processes and punitive measures, and which had the army, police, the bureaucracy and judiciary to implement the exploiters' decisions.

When we look deeply into the different periods of history, we find that the main task of the state was to perpetuate the rule of masters over slaves in ancient times, feudal lords over serfs and currently, in modern times, the rule of capitalists over workers. The example of how the law

operates in capitalist society unequally for different classes, which we have already noticed, also proves this point. Of course, even when the state is there to protect the interests of the exploiters, the workers sometimes have been able to snatch for themselves the right to be organised in trade unions by waging fierce class battles. But it will be wrong to think that the state and its organs are neutral or free from all contaminations of exploitation and violence.

It is true that the nonviolent policy of Gandhiji and various religions have expressed themselves very clearly against the naked and blunt manifestations of violence. But they fail to detect the violence that is concealed or the exploitation that is at the root of all violence and in fact they would not want to do so either. On the other hand, sometimes they advise us to fulfil our responsibility towards the 'neutral' state—actually compromise with the exploiting class and their state apparatus. Consequently, their open opposition to violence comes to naught. Coercion, oppression and bloody massacres are by no means ended. On the contrary, they spread more widely than before. It is no wonder that such messages based not on history and devoid of any sense of reality are infructuous.

Communism does not stand aghast at the manifest character of violence. Communism seeks to get at the very roots of violence in the concrete conditions of social or historical reality. In other words, communism seeks to uproot violence by ending exploitation. For when exploitation ceases classless society is gradually evolved and the state, the instrument of class oppression, also withers away in course of time. Communism, therefore, seeks not to apply palliatives but removes the very basis of violence and oppression.

From the point of view of method, also communism is against the capture of power by a secret palace coup by a handful of revolutionaries. It depends on the general mass of the people, who are the victims of exploitation by the

landlords and the capitalists. Communism organises these exploited people under the leadership of the working class in order to reach its goal. In other words, communism believes in awakening and organising the majority of people against the system of exploitation into a powerful mass democratic movement which becomes an irresistible force.

But surely communism cannot affirm with conviction that this just humanistic demand of the majority of the people will be accepted by the exploiting class, however much they may speak of democracy. Communism is only being realistic when it cannot make such an assertion. It has been proved from the days of the American Civil War in 1861 to the Spanish Civil War in 1936 that when the vested interests of the exploiting class are threatened by even the just demands of the majority of the people, the exploiters without the least thought of democracy openly tread the path of violence. In India the so-called Gandhian congress leaders behave in an exactly similar manner. We have only to recall Kerala in 1959 and West Bengal in 1967. In such a situation when the majority of the people is organised behind their just demand, communism has to try its best to resist the violence of the exploiting class with all the means at its disposal. To those who can see no difference between the violence by the aggressive exploiting class and this resistance of the exploited undertaken under compulsion, we can only say in the words of Tagore: 'He who does evil and he who condones it—both must equally share the guilt.'

There is one more thing in this connection. The strength of communism is no longer confined to the borders of a single country. Fourteen different countries of the world have now started their march towards communism. In other countries also this movement is gaining strength. As a result, communism today has become such a vast parallel system of society embracing a good part of the world that the exploiting class in spite of its repression and oppression cannot always secure its objectives.

For example, we know that at the time of a strike the more sympathetic the local people become towards the demands of the strikers and the more the working class is able to organise other sections of the people behind their demands, the more difficult it becomes for the exploiters to resort to repression.

Well, these at least are small matters, but the highest expression of the violence of the imperialist exploiters finds its manifestation in war. It was war they waged in Korea, Indo-China and Egypt as they are doing today in Vietnam and West Asia. In fact they spared no effort to spread that war all over the world and they are doing so again but they did not succeed and they must not be allowed to do so now. Public opinion the world over, and the biggest organised strength within it was undoubtedly that of communism, was able to stop these wars ultimately. It is clear even now that the imperialists will also fail to reach their objective in the war against Vietnam and be forced to stop the war.

So when communism advances today with irresistible force supported by the majority of humanity, the exploiting class even with all the will in the world cannot always resort to bloodshed or repression. On the contrary, there are indications that this task (of resorting to repression, etc.) will become increasingly difficult with each passing day. Hence under certain conditions arises the possibility of achieving socialism without civil war or prolonged violence.

Even then we cannot say for certain that the class of exploiters will give up their vested interests without resorting to bloodshed. It will be foolhardiness on our part if we are not prepared beforehand for all kinds of eventualities.

To sum up, therefore, communism wants to uproot violence by abolishing exploitation. As exploitation is abolished, the state which is the organ of class coercion and domination also withers away gradually. Communists do not believe in the capture of power by a handful of revolutionaries through secret conspiracy.

**Communism wants to achieve its aim, which corresponds to the hopes and aspirations of the majority of the mankind, by organising open movement and propaganda under the leadership of the working class and by adopting the peaceful and democratic path, avoiding bloodshed and violence. But communism is always vigilant and ready to meet the danger that the exploiting class may resort to violence to protect their vested interests. No doubt because of the spread of and increasing accession of strength to communism, it is becoming more and more difficult for exploiting class to resort to suppression and violence.**

#### NOT CRUDE CONSUMPTION BUT DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTEGRATED MAN

Well, it is clear that the theory and practice of communism are linked with the struggle for peace and democracy. But does communism visualise a future for mankind as one of just unlimited powers of consumption to be able to eat well, run a good motor car and in a general enjoy a high standard of life? Does communism have no other nobler future for mankind than this? What is the place of religion in communism?

We have already seen that the basic things of life are food, clothing and shelter. Unless these basic amenities of life are available, it is not possible for man to pursue literature, art or culture or delve deep into the realms of the mind. But because these are the basic things and not matters of the ultimate, therefore man can never be satisfied with only such things.

On the contrary, precisely because communism values a great deal the battle of ideas and humanism, it does not ignore the social reality that man cannot possibly reach the superstructural beauties of art, culture and the realm of mind without removing from his life the scourge of want, scarcity, exploitation, economic crisis and war. Only when

these problems are banished for ever from man's life can there be a leap from the realm of necessity to a realm of freedom. So when communism talks of finding a stable basis for securing the basic necessities of life by abolishing exploitation, it does not do so for the sake of satisfying the mundane needs of life only. Communism holds that it is only when the basic needs of life are satisfied that man is able to build up his immense superstructure of the things of the mind. It is this belief which prompts communism to carry on a tireless struggle against the system of exploitation.

How true is this will be evident when judged by the results. Everybody now admits that education and culture have spread widely in the countries under communism. And in every country, the believers in communism have sacrificed their personal comforts for the sake of their countrymen and humanity and have never faltered in facing untold hardships, in some cases even sacrificing their very lives for their ideal. Jawaharlal Nehru also admiringly writes: 'I have always admired their (i.e., the communists') great courage and capacity for sacrifice. They suffer greatly, as unhappily untold millions suffer in various ways, but not blindly before a malign and all-powerful fate. They suffer as human beings, and there is a tragic nobility about such suffering.' (*Autobiography*, Allied Publishers, 1962 edition, p. 592)

One more point. In a country like ours with its starvation, malnutrition, famine and pestilence, will it not be an instance of absolute heartlessness if we were to adopt a supercilious attitude towards the struggle for a higher standard of living under the plea that what matters is a higher spiritual life? Where is spirituality or idealism in such an attitude? In fact, we could quote Gandhiji's burning words here: 'When men all about me are dying for want of food, the only occupation permissible to me is to feed the hungry... To a people famishing and idle, the

only acceptable form in which god can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages.' (*The Great Sentinel*, *Young India*, 1921)

The relevant question arises—where is the place of religion in communism? Communism approaches the question from two angles, one ideological and the other practical.

From the ideological point of view, communism is based on the materialist philosophy, which accepts matter as primary. It holds that matter evolves into life and consciousness at its different phases of development. Communism does not believe in supernatural powers or god. But it does not overlook that, though many human values and principles are associated with religious precepts, the accepted religious practices and tenets very often compromise with the system of exploitation. Religion tries to sidetrack, directly or indirectly, the class consciousness and the spirit of revolt of the exploited humanity.

From the point of view of practice, communism believes that every man should be free to pursue and practise his own religious faith and under no circumstances should there be any repression on this point either overtly or covertly. Surely, both the theists and the atheists should be free to pursue their respective faith and attitude towards life. Faith in religion is very old in man's history; hence any interference in this deep long-standing belief amounts to interference in the primary right of man. Even here when we look at actual practice, we find that in states under communist form of government each man has the right to pursue his own religious practices and faith. There is no interference on the part of the state. What Dr. S. Radhakrishnan mentioned in this connection should be relevant:

'Not a small congregation takes place in the churches, mosques and synagogues in the Soviet Union. The Soviet state does not support any particular brand of religion, but nor does it interfere in the least in religious practices of its

citizens. People are often goaded into a kind of holy crusade against communism under the plea that communism is the biggest enemy of religion. But those who want to provoke people to such crusades forget that the kind of religion which communism opposes is that brand of "religion" whose basis is dark obscurantism, which creates division between man and man, which is a hindrance to all types of inspiration to man and is the supporter of social disparity and vested interest.' (*Jugantar*, 20 July 1956)

**Hence communism never accepts that the chief aim of life is gross satisfaction of one's desire for consumption. Communism wants that every man to attain a life of high thinking through education and culture. It is for this that communism wants to establish firmly the material basis of a fruitful life so that before all men is opened the high road to better life by making everyone happy, healthy and prosperous.**

**Communism does not believe in god or supernatural powers. It bases itself on materialism. But while adhering to this view, communism is also a staunch supporter of the right of every man to pursue his own religious faith and opposes any interference by the state on this score.**

#### COMMUNISM OPENS UP DIVERSITIES IN REAL LIFE

But all these belong to the realms of theory. Is communism then only a blueprint of a theory of such universal application that can bring all countries and all men under a uniform strait-jacket? Will communism bear the same character in every country or will there be scope for diversities and phases of development?

We may again refer to concrete reality to get at the truth. Altogether fourteen different countries—in Europe (nine countries): the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia,

Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, East Germany and Yugoslavia; in Asia (four countries): China, Mongolia, North Korea and North Vietnam; and in the western hemisphere: Cuba—a total of more than a hundred crores of people are today on the road to communism. But even when the goal is the same, it is wrong to think their paths forward are identical in character or that they are advancing forward at the same speed.

All the rivers reach the same ocean. But to imagine that all the rivers will cut across the land in the same pattern or their speed of flow will be the same is not correct. In fact, it is but natural that the rivers will flow in different directions according to the contour of the land. These fourteen different countries are similarly advancing towards the same goal, i.e., towards the great goal of communism. But their path of travel is varied and their speed of progress uneven. The reason for this is very simple. The conditions of these countries when the revolution took place were not the same. From the point of view of the technique of the production of wealth, social conditions and the standard of life, education and culture, some of these countries were advanced, some were backward. And different and distinct were the historical conditions, international set-up and national peculiarities in the case of each country. Hence revolutionary transformation assumed different characters in these different countries, and even after revolution they are not advancing along the same path with uniform speed.

Of these, the Soviet Union is no doubt the most advanced. It was here that the first working-class revolution took place in November 1917. In order then to remove the backward material and cultural conditions of this vast country, it adopted and fulfilled five-year plans one after the other. Now it can surely be said that the Soviet Union is entering the second phase of communism, outgrowing the first.

The first phase is called socialism and the second is

fullfledged communism. There are many similarities between these two phases. For example, the owners of the principal means of production of wealth in both the phases are the whole society and, therefore, there is no exploitation or exploiting class. The aim of both the phases is to achieve the maximum well being and cultural development of every human being according to a planned programme. It is because man can earn the fruits of his own labour that the actual work involved in production is no longer a burden or a drudgery to anybody. In fact, the dignity of labour is fully established and everyone exerts his best in both the phases—socialism and communism.

But along with these similarities, there are also differences between the two phases. For example, though social ownership is established over the principal means of production of wealth in both, the character of that social ownership in the first phase is of two kinds. One is state ownership, as in the case of the factories, banks, mines, etc. The other is the cooperatively or collectively owned property as in the case of land. In the second phase, when fullfledged communism is established, this difference goes and the whole society becomes the owner of all the means of production of the wealth of the society.

There is another difference. Even when men are working to the best of their capacities, the distribution of wealth is different in the two phases. When exploitation is ended and there is an effort towards increase in the material standard of life according to plan, the production of wealth increases at a tremendous rate. Still in this phase, in the phase of socialism, a person has to receive *according to his work, i.e., according to the hours and nature of his work*. Even then all men in the socialist phase of society can lead a sufficiently comfortable and even prosperous life.

In the final fullfledged phase, production of wealth will have increased so tremendously over what it was even at the first stage, that a person will not then need to receive

according to his work. Everyone will then receive *according to his needs*, i.e., he will get exactly what he requires.

It might appear to be an idle dream. How is it possible? Will not then everyone say—let me have all the motor cars that are being produced in the country, since I have need for all of them. But posing the problem in this manner is really a projection of our present-day point of view based on want and scarcity on to a society based on unimaginable abundance. Perhaps, a homely example may help to clarify the point. In a more or less well-to-do family all the members are having their dinner; the mistress of the house serves each according to his needs, and none is denied what he wants. She is able to satisfy everybody this way because there is enough food on the table. Here it may also be noticed that, perhaps, in the family some may work very hard, some less, the very young and the very old may not work at all. But when the hostess serves the food at meal-time, she certainly does not have to find out the hours of work put in by each in order to divide the courses proportionately; she is able to meet the need of everyone. And it should also be noted that nobody grabs at the other's plate of food when he is hungry.

Communism will be the society of abundance and plenty from all points of view. And when society reaches that stage man cannot remain backward psychologically or morally. That indeed is not possible. In the society of abundance man will also rise to his full stature. Surely we are still somewhat far away from that type of society and so a detailed discussion on this point will be rather speculative. We will not gain much from it either.

There is another difference between the first and the second stage. We have already seen that when exploitation is ended the state, instrument of class rule and class oppression, also comes to an end or withers away. The Soviet experiment teaches us that this will happen not in the socialist phase, i.e., the first phase of communism, but only

in the era of worldwide, fullfledged communist society—only when there is no encirclement of socialist countries by the imperialists. In the socialist phase even though exploitation is abolished, the former exploiters are still able to exert a certain amount of influence through various ways and the enemy states around a newly-born socialist state try their best to restore capitalism there. So the state machinery has to be there in order to suppress the enemy at home and abroad.

Even then there is a good deal of difference between the states which we have mentioned earlier and the socialist ones. This is so because, unlike them, a socialist state does not have to protect and perpetuate exploitation. On the contrary, the socialist state wants to abolish exploitation and block for ever its restoration as well as lay the basis for socialism. Secondly, unlike other states a socialist state does not believe in the rule of a handful of exploiters over the many, but the reverse—the rule of the overwhelming majority over a handful of exploiters.

Except the Soviet Union, all other thirteen states are still at the stage of socialism, that is the first phase of communism. Some of them are even now on the threshold of socialism. Conditions differ very widely amongst them and there are also many distinctive peculiarities characterising every one of them. But common to them all have socialist property relations, the end of exploitation, the state of the working people, led by the working class headed by the Marxist-Leninist party.

The Afro-Asian countries, just liberated from the imperialist yoke, are now engaged in a life-and-death struggle to wipe out the backward conditions which had existed so long. In reality, the revolution must take a different character here because of their hitherto dependent and now underdeveloped character. The main forces of exploitation here were the foreign imperialists and the indigenous landlords. In India the seventy-five monopoly houses have also

arisen. These classes obstruct like a road-block the path of social advance. Hence the immediate aim of these countries is to abolish imperialist and feudal exploitation, and in India in addition to abolish monopoly capital. To nationalise the foreign-imperialist-owned factories, tea-gardens, mines, banking institutions, etc., distribute the landlords' land among the peasants and break up the monopoly capitalist formations are the main tasks of this revolution. Hence, these countries will take a little time to arrive at the socialist phase of society.

The other countries of the world have not yet achieved their revolutions like fourteen socialist countries. But the laws which govern social development, described above, are also applicable to them. Hence in these countries also the march of events are in the same direction, even though the path of revolution would adopt somewhat unique character in each case. Class struggle and revolution are essential for any country to reach communism.

Those who want to accelerate that advance and make it successful from all points of view will have to be acquainted with the general laws of communism on the one hand, and on the other will have to direct a sharp and sensitive gaze constantly towards all changes in reality taking place all the time in their respective countries. Only then will the country progress and flourish at the touch of life, the touch of creative Marxism. Otherwise, a general application of the basic tenets of communism, irrespective of the peculiarities of a country and its historical setting, would land us in the deadly quagmire of dogmatism. Alternatively, a denial of the general laws of social development or subjective efforts to revise those laws fitfully would mean a total disaster, like a ship without a compass sinking in mid-ocean. This would be the disaster of revisionism.

**Communism is not a mere blueprint of a theory whose framework will apply rigidly to every country irrespective of its historical setting. Communism arises from a**



deep realisation of social reality. And precisely because there is diversity and stages in historical development, each country will advance along its own path towards communism. Precisely because social life and reality are not just a haphazard state of affairs but are governed by certain broad general laws, in spite of such variety and historical phases of development, therefore, we can say that every country in the world is advancing on the whole towards the same goal, the goal of communism, on the basis of certain common objective laws.

### INDIA AND COMMUNISM

Is communism then possible and feasible in our country also? And if so, will it be possible to establish communism in this country in the near future?

Our India is surely a wonderful country. We can confidently stand up and face others in the comity of nations on the strength of the glorious traditions of our own civilisation and culture. Our dependence on foreign rule tried to affect and belittle our Indianness and distinctive character at every step. But now we are again raising our head in the modern world as a great powerful multinational country with an heritage of an ancient great civilisation going back to thousands of years.

But does it follow from this that India is such a unique country that there is no similarity between us and any other country or that the general laws of social development do not at all apply in our case? Those who swear by the uniqueness of India to assert that communism is not feasible in our country will first have to prove that the average Indian is not concerned about the basic necessities of life, viz., how to secure food, clothing, shelter, etc., or that the difference and the consequent strife between the rich and the poor, the high and the low have never affected or will never affect our society in the least.

India, surely, has certain peculiarities and distinctiveness in relation to other countries. But it will be wrong to think that they are the only things. India, after all, is a part of the world. Hence with all the special characteristics of the Indian scene, the general laws of social development, referred to above, are certainly applicable to India also.

We have only recently taken up the study of ancient history from this point of view. The facts obtained so far reveals clearly that here also the class struggle found its expression in the different historical stages, one after the other. And after the British advent India indeed leapt into the vortex of world politics. Hence, the trend of development towards communism which we have mentioned before has not stopped at the Indian border. The Indian society today advances inexorably towards communism, with all its special characteristics, its unique history and its present pitiable and backward conditions. The path of advance towards communism in India will not, however, be a carbon copy of any other country—it will be an Indian path moulded by the reality of India's particular and distinctive conditions.

But can we establish communism right now in this country? No, because India's material, social and cultural progress was for a long time impeded due to dependence on foreign rule. India's wonderful rich humanity is the inheritor of great natural wealth and a long history. Yet today we happen to be miserable, illiterate and backward. We have to bear in mind particularly that the great majority of our people happens to be peasants. They still till the soil with very primitive implements though agricultural products happen to be the main wealth of the country. From the point of view of education also, the peasants constituting the majority of the population are also extremely backward. But communism means a great advance in material and cultural standard. An underdeveloped country like ours, therefore, will not be able to build up such an advanced

society overnight. We also are sure to advance towards communism like every other country, but we cannot attain it right now at one leap. We have to cover many stages of development before we start building a communist society.

The first stage of development towards communism would be the taking over of the central apparatus of state power by the overwhelming majority of the population, comprising the workers, peasants, middle class and even a large section of the Indian capitalists. And that new *national-democratic state* will have to nationalise factories, commercial houses, trading establishments, banks, mines, tea-gardens, etc. owned by foreign imperialists and distribute the land of the landlord class among the peasants, smash the monopoly houses, in order to clear the decks for national advance. In advancing along this path which will bring real welfare to the nation, the overwhelming majority of the population will increasingly come to accept the leading role of the working class in taking the country forward and, therefore, the leadership of the working class over the entire nation will be gradually established. This will clear the path of advance towards socialism. Hence, precisely because India is a part of the world, therefore, like any other country, communism is also inevitable here. But since India has its own distinctive special characteristics, there will be an Indian path to communism.

**Precisely because India is very backward from the material, social and cultural points of view due to long dependence on foreign rule, a straight leap to communism is not immediately possible. In the first stage, we will have to build up a national-democratic front to end imperialist and feudal and monopoly capitalist exploitation and establish a national-democratic state on the basis of that front. As the leadership of the working class is increasingly established over the national-democratic front, the state and the society, the nation and country will gradually advance towards socialism and ultimately communism.**