

# **Alienation in Socialist Countries : A Review of Literature**

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**D E C L A R A T I O N**

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## P R E F A C E

The concept of alienation is central to Marxism and forms a significant area of academic debate and discussion. The concern stays with Marx even though on one view the term alienation is dropped in his mature works and replaced by more specific categories.

A study of alienation in existing Socialist societies based primarily on secondary sources of material, is an ambitious task. This work is a summary of literature. But literature being practically limitless, there are two ways it can be dealt with. One is an exhaustive analysis by studying it historically. The other is picking up representative trends and figures. Since the first is impossible, the second course has been adopted. Some representative trends of critical thought about existing Socialism have therefore been chosen for analysis.

A simple and helpful distinction may be drawn here between critical analysis of the experience of living in a Socialist society which simultaneously seek to preserve the possibility of 'true' Communism or Marxism or to retain a loyalty to Leninism, and those critical analyses

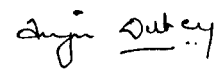
which are explicitly non-Marxist, perhaps anti-Communist, pro-Western and/or Liberal. I have analysed and drawn on from the first category.

I am indebted to my supervisor and teacher Dr. Sudipta Kaviraj, who has read the draft of this dissertation and offered many helpful suggestions, and who has rendered the task more pleasant by means of stimulating discussions. He has been remarkably patient and kind. This work has many weaknesses. It would have had more but for his incisive comments on the entire first draft.

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## INTRODUCTION

An assumption of a positive and close relationship between theory and political practice has generally constituted a fundamental feature of Marxist analysis.

The reality, of the present Socialist countries coupled with May 1968 events in France and in the same year events in Czechoslovakia which popularly came to be known as the Prague Spring and the recent experience in Poland have disrupted conventional forms of Marxist discourse and precipitated the process of re-examination, reformulation and re-conceptualisation. Whereas the limitations might once have been explained away as temporary or transitional features of societies progressing along the path to Communism, they are now considered to represent the development of a qualitatively different social order or to signify a termination of the transitional process.

The development of a more critical analytical orientation towards the societies of Eastern Europe and the corollary that perhaps their development is incompatible with the promise of Marxist theory has had two consequences. First, there has been increasing support for the observation

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that there no longer exists any model for Socialism. This has in turn precipitated the formulation of a series of questions concerning on the one hand the unrealized conception of Socialism, in particular the possibility and desirability of its realisation, and on the other hand, the reality of the societies of actually existing Socialism - of how they came to develop in their present form and whether they constitute a realisation of Marxist theory or are merely pathological forms or deviations.

A second, and related consequence has been that Marxist theory itself has been critically examined. Specific concepts and premises within Marxism have been identified as problematic, for instance the premise of economic determination in the final - instance, the conceptualisation of politics and power, the theorising of the relationship between structure, action, and consciousness etc.

Criticism of these societies have constituted criticism of the model for Socialism. This in turn has led to the expression of concern as to whether Socialism is at all possible and to even more fundamental question concerning the very idea of Socialism. Concomitantly the realisation that the societies of actually existing Socialism no longer constitute a good model has had consequences for Marxist

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theory. Assuming a close relationship between theory and the sequence of events concerned, the limitations of the societies of actually existing Socialism have been attributed to inadequacies in Marxist theory. Alternatively it has been argued that the societies of actually existing Socialism and their respective form of life was largely unforeseen or unanticipated by Marxist theory. In other words these societies testify to the limits of Marxist theory. They serve to weaken the claims for global relevance claimed by Marxism by reminding us of the partiality of Marxist theory towards the analysis of Capitalist mode of production.

Within Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union there have been a series of expressions of opposition to particular features of existing Socialist system. For instance, in 1953 in the German Democratic Republic a section of the working class, the 'social foundation' protested against the Communist government and its policies; in 1956, 1970, 1976 and again in 1980-81 in Poland there were significant protests and forms of opposition against the state; in 1956 in Hungary and in 1968 in Czechoslovakia popular reforms of the Socialist system were achieved and subsequently withdrawn by military intervention which sought to restore



the statusquo despite fierce public opposition; in the Soviet Union since 1965 beginning with the arrest and trial of Siniavski and Daniel, there have been a series of public protests against the trial of dissidents, principally intellectuals.

Some critics attribute the dictatorial tendencies of the bureaucratic state apparatus in the existing Socialist societies to the very doctrine of Marxism - Leninism and trace back its origins to the October Revolution itself in the case of Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn, for instance, in his work, 'The Gulag Archipelago' argues that the process of institutionalized terror is virtually synonymous with the aftermath of the October Revolution, for its origins may be traced right back to Lenin. At the end of 1917 Lenin expressed the view that it was necessary to develop "practical forms and methods of accounting and controlling in order to clean the land of Russia of all Vermin". He contends that Lenin had in mind not only all class enemies, but also indolent workers and "solvenly and hysterical intellectuals". Further, the process of purging extended from arrest, imprisonment and punishment at forced labor, down to the final solution of shooting of "parasites."

Solzhenitsyn indicates that the elasticity and ambiguity of the terms employed to identify the sections of community from which opposition and resistance might arise lent itself to exploitation

in the form of an expansion of the groups and organisations subjected to investigation and prosecution. All manner of people were classified as the source of potential disorder and opposition. He thus suggests that people in the co-operative movement, in teaching, on the parish councils, on the railway and in the trade union were often identified as hostile to the working class, not to mention the "many kinds of cursed intellectual there were . . . . who are always a hindrance to a well-ordered strict regime."

In order to cope with the vast number of suspects a new form of procedure was adopted, combining "investigation, arrest, interrogation, prosecution, trial and execution of the verdict" in the hands of the Cheka. Therefore, in the period before the establishment of a criminal code, or of a new system of criminal law, the Cheka was able to institutionalise specific operational procedures and to employ all the relevant techniques and disciplines at its disposal for the processing of suspects with the utmost efficiency.

Solzhenitsyn documents a whole series of purges, what he terms "waves", which swept Socialist revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Anarchists and Popular Socialists into the camps along with Russians returning from abroad, students guilty of criticizing the system, peasants who had contested the state's requisitioning of food - anyone,

indeed, whose political credentials were indoubt. Now, although the main body of Solzhenitsyn's work is focussed on the Gulag under Stalin, it is clear that the origin of the associated institutions & practices has not been solely attributed to that "cult of personality" even though some of the extreme excesses might have been. For Solzhenitsyn the practice of institutionalised terror not only existed prior to Stalin, but in addition survived him and Krushchev's cosmetic liberalisation. Indeed although Stalin may have been described as the supreme architect of the Gulag Archipelago, the existence of the camps has been depicted as inextricably linked to the existing political system and by implication, therefore, to Socialism. He writes:

Rulers change the Archipelago remains. It remains because that particular political regime could not survive without it. If it disbanded the Archipelago it would cease to exist itself.

The Gulag, has become an inevitable consequence of the October Revolution and its aftermath, namely the construction of a socialist society.

There are critics who may agree with Solzhenitsyn that the dictatorial and repressive tendencies can be traced back to Lenin, though partially, and others who may disagree but at the same time put the blame, on Stalin. Stalinism as being a

departure from Marxism-Leninism. Medvedev in his critical appraisal of Solzhenitsyn's work reveals a greater willingness to consider the possibility of Lenin's responsibility for the provision of at least some of the preconditions of Stalinism. Where Medvedev has parted company from Solzhenitsyn is over the question of the specific role of Stalin or to be more precise, over the issue of the relationship of Stalin and Stalinism to the October Revolution and to Lenin. Medvedev observes that although Solzhenitsyn's work is principally about the Stalinist terror, the personal role of Stalin has been relegated to the periphery. Stalin has been portrayed as merely a "blind and perfunctory executive agent following in the larger footsteps of Lenin."

This brings us to the crux of the matter i. e. identification of Lenin and the founders of Scientific Socialism as bearing responsibility for the deformation of the Soviet system and for the Gulag in particular.

Medvedev has expressed criticism of Solzheniteyn's repudiation of Marxism-Leninism because of its responsibility for the defects evident in the Soviet Union. His criticism has taken two forms.

On the one hand, Medvedev argues, that "true" Marxism-Leninism, "the point of departure for the development of Scientific

Socialism and Scientific Communism is like every other science at times imprecise and mistaken" but that it can't be charged with all the limitations and defects of the Soviet Union. Medvedev attempts to defend Marxism-Leninism's credentials, its scientificity from Solzhenitsyn's indictment that it has assumed the status of a dogma. He writes:

"Solzhenitsyn treats Marxism as though it were a dogma and imagines that it is enough to point out its in-exactitudes, errors and inaccurate forecasts in order to cause its followers to turn away from it. When, Solzhenitsyn and I were at school, Marxism-Leninism was indeed presented to us as a dogma. But Marxism-Leninism, Scientific Socialism, is not a dogma but a Science, which is to be developed like any other science and which has the same 'right to err'."

The second line of Medvedev's criticism is that Solzhenitsyn is incorrect in saying that Russia was prepared for a revolution, that Lenin forced it through and by employing unjustifiable methods against political opponents prepared the foundation for Stalinism. He argues that although there exists a continuity between the party which took power in October 1917 and that which governed the USSR in 1937, in 1947, in 1957 and in 1967 (when Solzhenitsyn was completing Gulag) this continuity is not synonymous with identify. Stalin did not always follow in "footsteps made before him." Outer Similarities marked very great inner divergences and in some cases even polar opposites, and the road to these was in no

way predetermined by an inevitable law of history. Within the framework of the relations between party, state and society created in Russia under Lenin, Stalin effected sharp turns and fundamental reversals merely preserving the outward shell of so-called Leninist norms and the official vocabulary of Marxism-Leninism. "Stalinism was in many respects the negation, and bloody annihilation of Bolshevism and of all revolutionary forces in Russia: it was in a determinate sense a genuine counter revolution.

The fact that existing Socialist countries have not overcome alienation in the way Marx thought they would leaves us with two theoretical possibilities. Either Marx was wrong in saying that alienation is specific to Capitalist societies only, or if he was correct, then the existing Socialist countries have not overcome alienation in the sense in which Marx thought they would and therefore cannot be called Socialist in Marx's sense. Chapter I analyses the concept of alienation by situating it in the context of labor teleology. It focuses on the element of purpose in human labour. What all men have in common, according to Marx is the ability to appropriate nature at the same time that they objectify themselves in it, developing themselves and altering nature simultaneously. The chief means of making the world a part of oneself and oneself a part of the world is the individuals' productive activity. Conscious, self-reflexive, purposeful activity

differentiates labor from the work done by other animals. Marx conceives of this activity as a series of dynamic relationships between each man or his particular powers and needs, and the real objects in the world, including other men. It is the concrete forms taken by man's powers and their objects, reflecting the level of their development, that determine the character of this interaction.

The theory of alienation is the intellectual construct in which Marx displays the devastating effect of Capitalist production on human beings, on their physical and mental states and on the social processes of which they are a part. Centered on the acting individual it is Marx's way of seeing his contemporaries and their conditions, as well as what he sees there. Brought under the same rubric are the links between one man, his activity and products, his fellows, inanimate nature and the species. As Marx's conception of man in Capitalist society, the theory of alienation may only be set out after its constituent elements have been accounted for. Chapter-I attempts to analyse precisely this.

The subsequent three Chapters are on critiques of the Socialist State. For the purposes of clarity they may be divided into the early and the contemporary critiques. Chapter-II condenses the former wherein arguments of Rosa Luxemburg,

Trotsky, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky and others are analysed.

The contemporary critiques may themselves be divided into those which are primarily political in content and others which are economic. The former centres on works of Rudolf Bahro and the latter on those of Włodzimierz Brus, Charles Bettelheim and J. Kornai.

To view Marx's vision of emancipation as being primarily economic - an idea on which the present Socialist societies are usually justified - is on this view an unacceptable reduction of his theory. The work, therefore, attempts to analyse not only political, nor only economic, but both political & economic critiques.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE LOGIC OF ALIENATION

What does it mean to lose oneself? What conception of a 'self' do we have which we can lose? This is central to the concept of alienation. First we shall deal with the concept of labor-teleology wherein the concept of purpose and relationship between causality and teleology is analysed.

Causality is a principle of motion on its own basis. It maintains this character even if a casual series has its point of departure in an act of consciousness. Teleology on the other hand, is by its very nature a posited category. Every teleological process involves the positing of a goal and, therefore, a goal positing agency/subject. To posit, in this connection does not mean simply to raise into consciousness but to initiate a real process. The teleological conception of nature and history, does not just refer to a purpose, an orientation to a goal but implies that this existence and movement must have a conscious creator both in the overall process and in its details.<sup>1</sup>

The medieval conception of man and nature failed to clarify the problem of purpose. Unaware of the human character of purposefulness

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1. Georg Luk'acs, The Ontology Of Social Being : Labour. Trans. by David Fernbach (London: Merlin Press, 1978), P.5

it projected purpose into nature explicable in terms of final causation. It perceived reality as a meaningful order in which every natural element had a definite place. Its 'movement' was a strive toward the ultimate goal. A supernatural authority (usually God) was alleged to have created the world with a purpose in view. This authority then took care, both directly and indirectly, that its intended purposes be faithfully realised.

Philosophers of modern times (Spinoza, Hobbes and others) reacted sharply against this teleology. They attempted to explain phenomenon, not in terms of final causation but contingent correlations. Nature was seen as being composed of several elements. Emphasis was laid on establishing a temporal sequence between them tantamount to posing a relationship not in terms of final causation but efficient causation. Nature was thus desacranized. The postulate of purpose was seen as being human and subjective, but subjective in a bad sense. In their eagerness to dismiss the theological argument in favour of an objective purpose, an unbridgeable gap was opened between teleology and causality. This led metaphysics to repudiate teleology in all its forms. All anthropomorphic notions were interpreted in a manner which deprived them of their humanity and gave them a naturalness no different from

other elements. In their zeal to establish the causal necessity of human actions, the specific dialectics of purpose and causality in labor was overlooked.

In classical German philosophy, the problem of teleology was posed afresh. This movement began with Kant.<sup>2</sup> He introduced the concept of purpose in his philosophy in the discussion of human action, of morality. The central idea put forward by Kant in this context was the proposition that man is an end in himself and may not under any circumstances be used as a means to any other

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2. Kant asked a number of new questions about teleology. These had no immediate connection with Hegel's approach to the problem. Yet, on the one hand his arguments provide us with ammunition against the more recent theories of history of Philosophy which attempt to show that Hegel merely continued what Kant had begun, and on the other hand, Hegel's own method of solving the problems of teleology was undoubtedly influenced indirectly or at least made easier by the fact that the entire complex had been raised and was very much in the air. For, if we must reject as unscientific and confusing any assumption that classical German philosophy is to be treated as a single undifferentiated unity, we must also be on our guard against the opposite fallacy which assumes that Hegel lived in a philosophical vacuum in which he simply proposed problems as they occurred to him and solved them as best he might.

end whatsoever. This theory was extended by Fichte.<sup>3</sup> Kant argued against the empiricist attempt to reduce all subjectivity to the objective world. Emphasis was laid on the universalibility of a moral proposition i.e. to transform ones Maxim<sup>4</sup> in to a law which has a categorical imperative.<sup>5</sup> Human beings argued Kant give laws unto themselves by the use of 'reason'. Reason is the faculty which tells one to strive for the highest good i.e. freedom. Freedom inheres in conquering ones passions. Since passions are in this world, freedom from it implies transcendence of the given world. This makes human beings autonomous.

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3. It represents an ideological revolt against the treatment meted out to human beings in the system of feudal absolutism. It contains an ethic which reflects the moods of the period of the French Revolution after the fashion of German idealism.
  4. Maxim : A Maxim is a subjective principle of action, for instance, our desires, impulses and passions determining our actions. Against this 'laws' are objectively valid.
  5. Categorical Imperative : is a command which is unconditional and must be followed under all circumstances. It is *a priori*, and not *aposteriori*. Against this, a Hypothetical Imperative is variable and conditional upon something else. It, therefore, has a form of 'if---then statement.

Both Kant and Fichte, are, however, under the necessity of establishing some contact between this world of pure morality and that of objective reality, they end up reproducing the old view of teleology, despite an intention which runs contrary to it. They too share the assumption of the old teleology, that, nature is nothing in itself but only in relation to something else. It, therefore, again opens up an unbridgeable gulf between man and nature, between purpose and causation.

Hegel's analysis of the dialectics of human labor annulled this antithesis of causality and teleology by locating conscious human purposes concretely within the overall causal network without destroying it, going beyond it or appealing to any transcendental principle.<sup>6</sup>

The breadth and depth of man's knowledge of cause and effect is a function of the purposes man sets himself in the work process. Man comes to recognise the chain of causes and effect more and more precisely in order to make nature for him. The labor process can never go beyond the

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6. Georg Luka'cs, The Young Hegel. Trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1975), P. 345.

limits of causality. Human beings can only perform those operations with the means or objects of labor that the laws or combination of laws governing these objects will permit. Human invention thus inheres in revealing these causal relationships which are then introduced into the labor process. The specific nature of final causes as both Hegel and Marx correctly saw is just that the idea of the objective or purpose to be achieved comes into being before the work process is set in motion.

What differentiates human labor from the work done by other animals is that at the end of the labor process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only affects a change of form in the material on which he works but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law of his *modus operandi* and to which he must subordinate his will<sup>7</sup>.

This work process exists for the purpose of achieving the desired objective by means of an ever greater penetration of causal relationships existing in reality. This purposiveness gives objects and forces of nature a different form and function than the one they would have had without man's intervention. This mediation can bring about effects

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7. Karl Marx, Capital, P. 170.

which were hitherto unknown or existed as a matter of chance. The irreconcilability of causality and teleology is in reality a dialectical contradiction in which the laws governing a complex pattern of objective reality become manifest in motion, in the process of its own constant reproduction. Man and nature, purpose and cause are, therefore, not antithetical to each other. Hegelian thought is, thus, anti-dualist.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas labor teleology is merely an instantiation or one of the many phenomenal forms of the logic of teleology in the Hegelian system, for Marx, it is the nodal point of the production process in a capitalist social formation. Marx denies the existence of any kind of teleology out side of labor (human Practice).

Labor is specific in man as a free activity and is contrasted with the "animal functions - eating, drinking, procreating---"<sup>9</sup> which belong to the realm of necessity. The power of man to "objectify" himself, through, his labor

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8. Georg Luka'cs, The Ontology Of Social Being : Labour Trans. by David Fernbach (London: Merlin Press, 1978).
9. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 71.

is a specifically human power. The term "objectify" here, connotes not merely the idea that something is made real in the sense of materialisation. The term "object" also means something is posited as a future purpose of labor. Centrality of labor, therefore, means the priority of purposiveness.

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx, lays emphasis on man as a "species being"<sup>10</sup> Only as a social being can man humanize nature. Social and natural are not antithetical to each other. Social is the way of being of nature in man. The idea that man is a species being would mean:

- a) By perceiving ourselves as a species, we are able to discern the essential qualities that make us what we are (thus to clarify a particular thing according to its essence).
- b) To know what is it that makes us specific and what is the nature of the specificity allows us to see what is common between all members of the same "species" (Thus a genuine concept of a "WE")

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10. Ibid., p. 72.



c) We, as human beings, have the capacity not only to understand ourselves - to make our species an object for our theory and practice - but to understand the inner structure of something else. Dispassionately in a detached manner we can study a thing-in-itself by getting out of our anthropocentricity. We can apply the standards of other things to those things - not our own standards or vantage point. We can, therefore, get to the "essence" of other things.

The essence of man, therefore, is "conscious life activity"<sup>11</sup>. Its not just consciousness/rationality like the idealist, nor just labor in the sense of physical movement. It is conscious, self-reflexive, purposeful activity. Man is able not merely to reproduce himself but to reproduce nature through the intervention of his causally determined purposes. Freedom, is, then, not freedom from nature but to be able to get to the nature of everything. It is universality. Conscious life activity, universality and freedom are thus conceptually, internally related.

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11. Ibid., p. 73.

The theory of alienation, in Marx, stresses the fact of segmentation or practical breakdown of these interconnected elements, of the particular unity between man and nature and between man and man. It focuses on the presumed independence of these elements. Man is spoken of as being separated from his work - a break between the individual and his life activity. Man is said to be separated from his products - a break between the individual and the material world. He is also said to be separated from his fellow men - a break between man and man. In each instance a relation that distinguishes the human species has disappeared and its constituent elements have been reorganized to appear as something else.<sup>12</sup>

In his celebrated section on Estranged labor,<sup>13</sup> Marx presents alienation as partaking of four broad relations which are so distributed as to cover the whole of human existence. These are his relation to his productive activity, his product, other men and the species. The distinction between them is merely analytical. These four moments are aspects of an organic whole. Hence an explanation could begin with

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12. Bertell Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 133-134.

13. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp. 66-80.

any one and go naturally on to the others. Between these four, Marx may, however, be arguing that alienated laboring activity is the axial concept in this organic whole.

Productive activity in capitalism is spoken of as "active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation..."<sup>14</sup>. To the question, "what then constitutes the alienation of labor?" Marx offers the following reply:

First, the fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker, therefore, only feels himself outside his work and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it.<sup>15</sup>

Here Marx's point of reference is species man. He is describing a state where the relation between activity and man's powers exist at a very low level of achievement. With the development of division of labor and the highly repetitive nature of each productive task, men are deprived of the well rounded variety of powers and activities which

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14. Ibid., p. 70

15. Ibid., P. 71

they need to be full human beings. Instead of developing the potential inherent in man's powers, capitalist labor consumes these powers without replenishing them. Marx stresses distortions both of man's body and mind. Among the physical distortions described are stunted size, bent backs, overdeveloped and under developed muscles, enlarged lungs etc. Similarly his decreasing will power, his delusions, and mental inflexibility and ignorance are of gigantic proportions.<sup>16</sup>

The worker's feeling of being at home when he is not working and "not at home" when he is working indicates the alienated character of his labor. Two other aspects of alienated labor are also dealt with: (a) that this labor is the private property of non-workers and (b) that it results in the reversal of his human and animal functions.

"The external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs not to himself but the another".<sup>17</sup> It is forced labor performed under compulsion and coercion by another man. Spontaneous

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16. Karl Marx. Capital Vol. I, P. 349; P. 360; P. 484.

17. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), P. 71

activity is, therefore, transformed into "coerced labor" - an activity which is a mere means to obtain essentially animal ends.

〔Activities which man shares with animals appear more human than those which mark him out as a man. Eating, drinking and procreating are occasions when all man's powers may be fulfilled together. Under capitalism, however, they serve their direct and most obvious function as do their equivalents in the animal kingdom. Since man can still exercise more choice in these, than he does in others which distinguish him as a human being, he feels he is atleast doing something which he "wants" to do. The same cannot be said about his productive activity.〕

The products resulting from this alienated activity are then alienated too.<sup>18</sup> For the product is "... but the summary of the activity of production ... In the estrangement of the object of labor is merely summarized the estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labor itself".<sup>19</sup>

Man's productive activity is objectified in his products. By transforming the real world to serve his needs and purposes it leaves its mark - the mark of his species

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18. Ibid. , p.68

19. Ibid. , p.70

power - on all he touches. It is in this sense that man "puts his life" into the objects, the latter expressing in what they are the character of the organic world to which both they and the living person who made them belong. The product of labor is labor which is congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification.<sup>20</sup> The alienation in the products of labor means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, "but that it exists outside him independently as something alien to him and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him".<sup>21</sup>

What distinguishes objectification in Capitalism is thus the turning of human creations into hostile powers dominating and enslaving their creators. We shall analyse this in the context of the concept of Fetishism.

The term "Fetish" is derived from discourse on religion. To make a "fetish" of something is to invest it with powers it does not in itself have. In religious

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20 Ibid. , p. 68

21 Ibid. , p. 69

fetishism this power is vested in the object by an activity of thought. The object, therefore, does not really acquire the power mentally referred to it. But if a Culture fetishises an object, its members come to perceive it as endowed with power. What is mistakenly attributed to it is experienced as inhering in it. The fetish then manifests itself as endowed with a power which it actually lacks. The power it possesses is not in the real world, but in a world of illusion.

Marx identified several fetishes in the sphere of economy : Commodity fetish being most important. The economic fetish is partly analogous to the religious fetish. It is endowed with a power which in a sense it lacks, whereas the religious fetish simply lacks the power, i. e. , the economic fetish has the power but not inherently. Moreover, the appearance of this power in an economic fetish results not from a thought process but from a process of production. It arises from the way production is organized in a commodity society. In economic fetishism there is a gulf between reality and its own appearance. The mind registers the fetish. It does not, as in the religious case, create it.<sup>22</sup>

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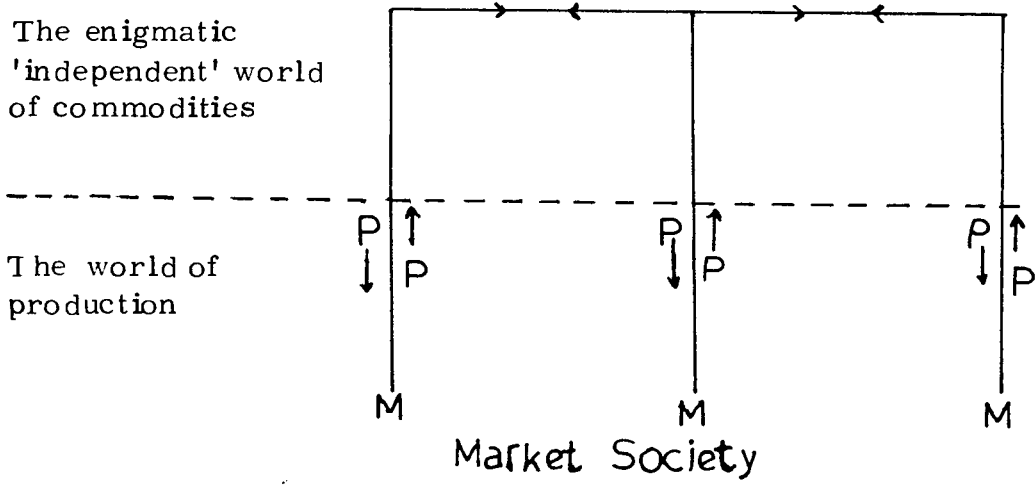
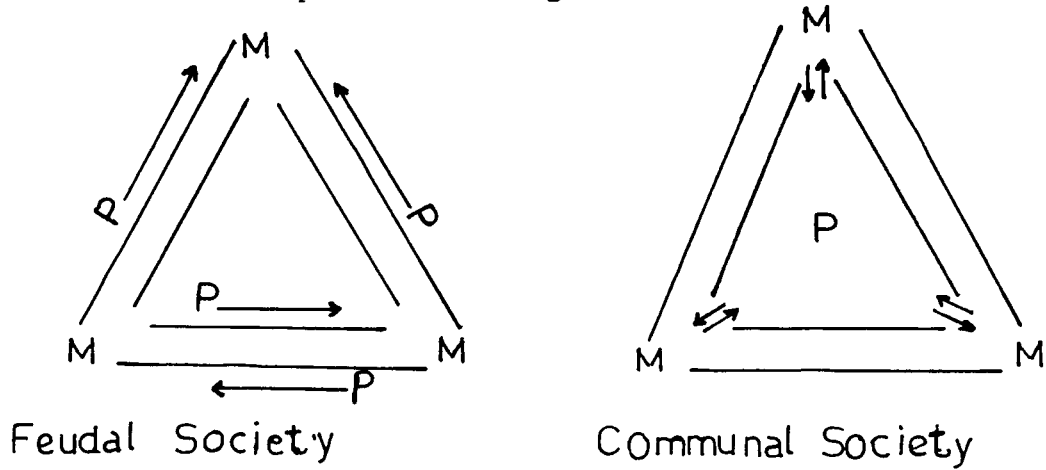
22. G.A. Cohen, Karl : Marx's Theory of History : A Defence (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1982), p.116

Commodity fetishism is the appearance that products have value in and of themselves apart from the labor bestowed on them. This does not derive from the fact that commodities have use values or are the products of a certain amount and kind of labor in a social form. All products, are, by this logic. What is mystifying is not that there is a social form, but that there is a specific social form. What matters is the specific manner in which the social character of labor is established.

Mystery arises because the social character of production is expressed only in exchange, not in production itself. The product lacks social form anterior to its manifestation as a commodity. The commodity form alone connects producing units in market society. In contrast to this, production is immediately social in other social formations (primitive communities, feudalism and the future free association of producers). The relationships are not mediated through the market but are immediate and transparent. In the Commodity society however producers connect only mediately through exchange, not as producers but as Marketeers. Commodities are immediately social and producers relations are only indirectly so.



The differences between these social formations can be depicted in a diagram.<sup>23</sup>



The M's are men, the P's products. Parallel lines represent bonds obtaining between men and in virtue of which products change hands. Arrows indicate the movement of products between them. First, Feudal society is shown, with traditional claims of particular persons on one another. (The figure

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23. See Ibid., p.121. for this diagrammatic depiction.

at the top is the lord, to whom products are due, but who does not, in his turn, supply any to producers). Then we have communal production, in which each contributes to and takes from an aggregate product. Finally, Market society, whose "purely atomic" members are in serial disconnection, linked only via exchange of products. The diagram portrays the duplication of world peculiar to commodity production.

{The explanation of Commodity fetishism is that if elements (here producers) which must be united are initially severed they come to be joined indirectly on an alienated plane, in illusory forms. Division in what needs to be united leads to duplication: a second world arises to confer a surrogate coherence on the fragmented elements.}

The social form is thus alienated from the productive content and dominates it. Social relations between things assert themselves against material relations between persons who lack direct social relations. It appears that men labor because their products have value, whereas in fact they have value because labor has been bestowed on them. Men do not recognise their own authorship of the value through which alone they relate and which, therefore, regulates their lives as

producers. They are thus in a quite specific sense alienated from their own power, which has passed into things. Thus, exchange value appears to transcend its material basis in labor and to derive from the substance of the commodity itself. Exchange value is a social-relational-property of a thing and fetishism veils its source in material relations between persons.

Money which is exchange value divorced from use value, perfects the alienated mediation of producers in a Capitalist society, reaching its height in interest bearing Capital. Here, people, think they see "money creating more money, self expanding value".<sup>24</sup> When money "grows" in this way, "the result of the entire process of reproduction appears as a property inherent in the thing itself"<sup>25</sup> Workers, machines, raw-materials are downgraded to mere aids, and money is made the producer of wealth.

The labor relation itself is transformed into wage labor, an abstraction divested of its unique character. People in capitalism see labor, their distinctive alienated labor which produces value, as the productive activity of all men at all

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24. Karl Marx, Capital Vol III, p. 804; Also see Theories of Surplus Value, p. 122.

25. Ibid., p. 384

time and as an activity which is responsible for only that part of value that is returned to them as wages. Hence, labor is thought of as having "natural price".

In a Situation, where production relations appear to people as things their "... interrelations due to the world market, its conjecture, movements of market prices, periods of credit, industrial and commercial cycles, alternations of prosperity and crisis appears to them as over whelming natural laws that irresistibly enforce their will over them and confront them as blind necessity"<sup>26</sup>.

People tend to view these recurring economic events, which they designate with the lable "law", as natural attributes of nature. But neither God nor nature demands their occurrence. What appears as "blind necessity" is but the unchecked development of the social production relations of Capitalism.

Like Commodities, Capital too is fetishised in a Market economy.<sup>27</sup> The productivity of men working with

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26. Ibid., p.820.

27. G.A Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History : A Defence (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1982), p.115.

means of production takes the form of productivity of Capital. Capital is productive but not autonomously so. It, however, appears to be autonomously productive. This appearance is fetishism. Productivity is separated from its basis in material production and attributed to Capital itself. Then productivity is referred back to labor power and means of production as physical embodiments of capital. They appear productive in virtue of being embodiments of Capital, whereas, in fact, Capital is productive in virtue of its embodiment in them. Since Capital reigns over the entire productive process (the means of production are available only as Capital and it is only as (Variable) Capital that labor power can be operated), the power of that process appears as due to Capital. The Capitalist thus appears as the producer and the labourers as the instruments "incorporated in capital". All of labor's use value, its concreteness is thus transcended by Capital.

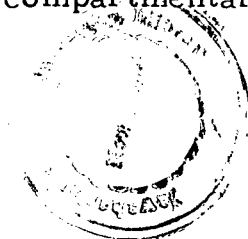
Alienation, however, is not merely an economic phenomenon. Under Capitalism, all expressions of life are facets of man's alienation. His actions in religion, family affairs, politics etc. are as distorted and brutalised as his productive activity. For, the man taking part in these different activities is the same. If one attempts to compartmentalize

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alienated activity according to the sphere in which it takes place, its products must also be set apart as value, state, religion etc. But all these share certain basic similarities for "alienation" is "essentially" the same wherever it occurs. A pattern can be discerned in this totality. And it is essentially the way Capitalist production relations are organized : the social character of labor being expressed only in exchange and not in production itself. Everything in Capitalism has a price.<sup>28</sup> Thus class, state, religion etc., in the form in which they appear, are not only the fruits of Capitalist production; they are as well part of what is meant (or can be meant) by "Capitalist relations of production".

Alienation, as Marx conceives of it, therefore, is not fundamentally a matter of consciousness or of how people

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28. Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 36, of Capitalism, Marx Says, 'Finally there came a time when everything that men considered as inalienable became an object of exchange of traffic, and could be alienated. This is the time when the very things which till then had been communicated but never exchanged; given, but never sold; acquired but never bought - Virtue, love, conviction, knowledge, conscience etc. - when everything in short passed into commerce. It is the time of general corruption, of universal venality, or, to speak in terms of political economy, the time when everything moral or physical, having become a marketable value, is brought to the market to be assessed at its truest value.'

in fact feel about themselves or their lives. Alienation is rather a state of objective unfulfilment, of the frustration of really existing human needs and potentialities. The consciousness people have of their unfulfilment is merely a reflection of alienation, at most a symptom or evidence of it. Marx's real grounds for believing that people in Capitalist society are alienated is not that they are conscious of being alienated, but rather the objective existence of potentialities for human fulfilment that must be frustrated as long as the Capitalist mode of production prevails.

Marx's concern was directed toward the emancipation of human being from this alienated existence. Perhaps the most significant form into which the theory of alienation is cast - most significant because it chiefly determines the theory's application - is the internal relation it underscores between the present and the future.<sup>29</sup> Alienation can only be grasped as the absence of non-alienation, each state serving as the point of reference for the other. And, for Marx, non-alienation is the life man leads in Communism. Without some knowledge of the future millennium alienation remains a reproach that

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29. Bertell Ollman, Alienation : Marx's Conception Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.132.

can never be clarified. We can understand this by contrasting the expressions "health" and "disease" : "We know what it is to have a particular disease because we know what it is not to. If we did not have a conception of health the situation covered by the symptoms would appear normal. Furthermore when we declare that someone is ill we consider this a statement of "fact" and not an evaluation based on an outside standard. This is because we ordinarily conceive of health and disease as internally related, the absence of one being a necessary element in the meaning of the other".<sup>30</sup> Similarly because Marx posits an internal relation between the states of alienation and non-alienation that we cannot regard his remarks as evaluation. There is no outside standard from which to judge. Alienation, then, is used by Marx to refer to any state of human existence which is away from or less than non-alienation.

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30. Ibid., p.132. Ollman argues that we can see the same 'logical geography' in the whole host of 'double headed objectives' with which Marx showered his contemporaries. How can he describe the labourer's plight as 'degradation', 'dehumanisation', and 'fragmentation' and, the labourer himself as 'stunted', 'thwarted,' and 'broken'? Only because he is aware, however, imprecisely, of their opposites.



Further if Communism is accepted as the relevant measure then all classes are alienated in the ways and to the degree that their members fall short of the Communist ideal. Thus, Marx claims that one of the manifestations of alienation is that "all is under the sway of inhuman power" and adds "this applies also to the capitalist"<sup>31</sup>. Though the proletariat's affliction is the most severe and Marx usually has them in mind when he makes general statements, about 'man's alienation', other classes are included in the reference in so far as they share with the proletariat the qualities or conditions which are being commented upon.

If alienation is taken to be a set of relations between people and nature, both animate and inanimate, then many of the traits observable in the proletariat can be found, only slightly altered, in other classes. The connection Marx sees between proletarian alienation and that of the rest of mankind is expressed in his claim that "the whole of human servitude is involved in this relation of the worker to production, and every relation of servitude is but a modification and

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31. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 118.

consequence of this relation."<sup>32</sup> By producing alienated material objects and, in the process themselves as an alienated class, the proletariat can be said to produce the alienation of people with whom they and their products have relations. Hence Marx's claim that "the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation".<sup>33</sup>

When the Socialist or Communist overcoming of alienation is mentioned, some mean that the fundamental difference between leisure and working time will disappear. Work will then be turned into some sort of play. A distinction should be made here. Work can never be play because play stands outside the chain of objective necessity. The fundamental characteristic of play is that man, if he errs, may 'replay the play'. He may even 'outwit' the rules because he has made these rules himself. The freedom of play is a subjective freedom. Work, on the other hand, as metabolism with nature (Marx) is based on the observation of laws of nature and their application, its essence being provided by a relationship of objective causality.

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32. Ibid., p. 78

33. Ibid., p. 78

EARLY CRITIQUES OF THE SOCIALIST STATE

The Communist Movement made its appearance with the promise of solving the basic problems of modern Capitalism and overcoming the antagonisms of human existence. It aimed at the abolition of Capitalist private property - of Capitalist alienation which meant not merely the act of abolition but first and foremost the positive appropriation of the newly acquired social wealth by the freely associated producers in the post-revolutionary situation. It claimed to establish a society that would represent a higher level of social organisation. What perspective are people offered in the present situation, if they turn their eyes to the practise of their social life. Is there anyway of telling how the new order plans to prove its superiority, by a more effective organisation and economy of labor? Has it attained its promised break - through to the humanisation of collective life or is it at least making daily progress in this direction in as much as the goal is not yet reached ?

First, we shall briefly go into the controversies of 1920's. This is necessary for it puts the critique in an historical perspective. These were dominated by the problem of New Economic Policy - NEP. In the civil war period Soviet Russia came to be governed

under a system which became known as War Communism. The state nationalised virtually all industry, outlawed private trade, forcibly prevented the peasants from marketing their own products and sought to requisition surpluses. Money lost virtually all value, industrial production declined catastrophically. The inefficient and in-experienced Bolshevik states proved incapable of organising trade and distribution. The peasants resisted requisitions and reduced production. Towns starved. At the height of the War - Communism period, that is in 1918-20, the left wing among Bolshevik intellectuals thought that a leap into Socialism was being accomplished, with the collapse of the economy and of the Rouble as a necessary prelude to a state of affairs in which the proletariat would control all economic transactions without the use of money. At this time both Bukharin and Preobrezhensky held such beliefs. However, though "War Communism" had some kind of rationale while a destructive civil war was in progress, since it helped to concentrate the few available resources on the needs of the front, the demand for a new approach proved irresistible once the civil war was over. Peasant riots, workers' strikes, and finally the mutiny of the sailors at Kronstadt compelled Lenin to retreat and adopt the New Economic Policy. Private trade and small scale private manufacture were legalised, and the peasants were free

to sell to private merchants or to market their own produce, subject only to a tax in kind.

While NEP led to a rapid recovery in both industry and agriculture, and while the state retained the so-called "commanding heights" of the economy (large scale industry, foreign trade), the fact remained that the Bolshevik Party was rulling over a country which was eighty percent - peasant. The peasants had divided up the land among themselves, and there were now some twenty five million family holdings, many of them cultivated merely for subsistence. The peasants once in possession of the land were anything but a revolutionary force. During the civil war enough of them supported the Bolsheviks, or failed to support their opponents, because they feared the return of the landlords. But under NEP the peasants were interested in free trade and high prices and forged links with private traders and petty manufacturers in the cities. The Bolsheviks, rulling in the name of the dictatorship of the Proletariat, were isolated in a 'Petty - bourgeois' environment. Even Lenin conceived NEP as a necessary retreat. By retaining political power in the hands of a highly disciplined Bolshevik Party, he hoped it would be possible to resume the advance towards Socialism at a more propitious moment.

In 1923, Trotsky with Preobrazhensky in support was faced with a powerful triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, with the latter in a key position as General Secretary of the Party. He was able to use this position to outmanoeuvre not only Trotsky and his followers but later also Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Meanwhile Bukharin, Preobrazhensky's erstwhile friend and collaborator, became the principal ideologist of NEP, stressing the vital importance of the alliance with the peasants. This led him, logically to demand greater facilities for the better off peasants, who were responsible for a large part of marketed output, the more so as marketings had declined sharply as compared with the pre-war. It also led him to stress the importance of providing the kind of industrial goods which the peasants wanted, and therefore of expanding the consumer-goods industries. He looked forward to the gradual squeezing out of the private sector by competition, using the economies of scale which represented a great and yet unused potential of Socialist industry. This industry argued Bukharin, will gradually move towards overall planning, but this<sup>n</sup> sort of planning is not conceivable by itself, since our industry

produces to a great extent for the peasant market."<sup>1</sup> Peasant demand must be studied, the peasant economy must grow and be modernised. The peasants will gradually see the advantage of joining together. "It is evident that we cannot persuade, or even try to persuade, the peasants to go over at once to uniting their land holdings. Old habits have so impregnated the people that to break habits is not possible. Yet, nevertheless, the peasants will inevitably travel the road towards unity"- and this will be "through co-operation", by stages: first marketing and purchasing co-operatives, then such joint production as butter making and other processing. These peasant co-operatives will, as a whole, "grow into the system of economic organs of the proletarian state, and this will mean that we take large steps on the road to socialism".<sup>2</sup>

The left group of which Preobrazhensky was the principal spokesman, challenged this conception on both political and economic grounds. They saw grave political dangers arising from an increase in the power of the Kulaks, i. e. the richer

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1. N.I. Bukharin Quoted in Alec Nove, Political Economy and Soviet Socialism (London : Allen and Unwin, 1977), p. 93.

2. Ibid., p. 94.

peasants. These were regarded as a deadly danger to the Soviet regime, as they might come gradually to control the villages and, through their grip on food supplies, to challenge the authority of the state. As they saw it, a change in the balance of social and economic power was vital, and the would be achieved by pressing ahead with rapid industrialisation. The period in which it was possible comparatively cheaply to reactivate damaged and unused factories was coming to a close. Heavy additional investment would be needed.

But how, in the conditions of NEP, could rapid industrialisation be financed? It is to this question and to the relationship between the private sector and socialised industry, that Preobrazhensky put forth his concept of "Primitive Socialist Accumulation."<sup>3</sup> It was obvious, argued, Praobrazhensky, that the relatively small and weak socialist sector could not possibly bear the whole burden of investment. Resources must be obtained from private enterprises, that is, in the main from peasants, since these constituted about four fifths of the population. To achieve this, prices charged by the state for

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3. E. Preobrazhensky, New Economics Trans. by Brian Pearce (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1965), Chapter II. 'The Law of Primitive Socialist Accumulation, pp. 77-136.



the products of its industry should be such as would compel peasant purchasers to contribute to investment in the socialised sector. This form of non-equivalent exchange would be a necessary substitute, in Soviet conditions, for what Marx had described as "primitive capitalist accumulation." Of course, argued Preobrazhensky, the Soviet state could not indulge in capitalist forms of exploitation, colonialism etc. None the less, there would have to be some form of "primitive socialist accumulation" if industrialisation was ever to be undertaken by it.

This doctrine evoked wide spread dissent. In 1923 the Soviet economy faced what was called "scissors crisis": the terms of trade between town and country had become so unfavourable to the latter that the peasants were reluctant to sell their produce. To encourage them to sell more, industrial prices had to be reduced, and a vigorous drive was launched for a much needed increase in the efficiency of state industry. Those who, like Bukharin took NEP seriously and wished to avoid a clash with the peasantry, strongly objected to the practical consequences of Preobrazhensky's case. They accused him of favouring the "exploitation of the peasants, of advocating a kind of internal colonialism and, therefore of threatening the

economic and political stability of the Soviet state." Stalin at this stage sided with Bukharin, though he carefully avoided committing himself too far to the latter's pro-peasant formulations. In the subsequent polemics Preobrazhensky denied that he had advocated the impoverishment of the peasants and argued that his aims would be realised even if peasant incomes continued to rise, provided that industrial costs were reduced and agricultural productivity increased. In other words, a high rate of growth of current output would make possible a substantial increase in investment without any diminution in current consumption. He claimed to be merely stating the economically obvious when he asserted that large scale industrialisation in a peasant country would have to be largely paid for by the peasant.<sup>4</sup>

Stalin and Bukharin were far from denying the need for industrialisation. They declared themselves for "socialism in one country" ie. they believed that it would be possible to build a Socialist industrial state in Soviet Russia, without the support of revolutions in developed Western countries. However, they argued for caution, for slow tempos, because it was essential to avoid the break-up of the alliance between workers and peasants upon which Soviet rule was supposed to rest. Bukharin in particular

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4. Ibid., pp. 227-31

would only go as fast as the peasants would let him, and spoke of 'riding into Socialism on a peasant nag'.

Some of the problems which appeared later were foreshadowed in the debate between the Soviet emphasis on Centralised Organisation and the Luxemburg line of spontaneity. For Lenin the element of spontaneity was "essentially nothing other than the germinal form of consciousness" which is brought to completion in the organisation and only then is truly revolutionary because completely conscious.<sup>5</sup> "The fact that the masses are spontaneously entering the movement" he writes "does not make the organisation of this struggle less necessary. On the contrary, it makes it more necessary".<sup>6</sup> The mistake inherent in the spontaneity theory, he says, is that "it belittle the role of the conscious element" and that it "refuse strong individual leadership", which for Lenin is "essential to class success". The weaknesses of organisation are to him the weaknesses of the labor movement itself. The struggle must be organised, the organisation planned.

Tosa Luxemburg sees these matters in a quite different light. For her, the revolutionary consciousness is the act-

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5. V.I. Lenin, On Trade Unions collected works (Moscow : Foreign languages Publishing House, 1968).

6. V.I. Lenin, What is to be done? Trans. by S.V. and Patricia Utechin (London:Oxford University Press, 1970)

consciousness of the masses themselves, growing from the constraint of necessity. The masses act revolutionarily because they can't act otherwise, and because they must act. She writes "...during the revolution it is extremely difficult for any directing organisation of the proletarian movement to foresee and calculate which occasions and factors can lead to explosions and which cannot.... The rigid, mechanical, bureaucratic conception", She says, "cannot conceive of the struggle save as the product of organisation at a certain stage of its strength. On the contrary, the living, dialectical explanation makes the organisation arise as a product of the struggle."<sup>7</sup> With reference to the Russian mass strike of 1905, She observes that there was no predetermined plan, no organised action, because the appeals of the parties could scarcely keep in pace with the spontaneous rising of the masses, the leaders had scarcely time to formulate the watchwords of the on-rushing crowds. Generalising, She continues. "If the situation should lead to mass strike in Germany, it will almost certainly not be the best organised workers who will develop the greatest capacity for action, but the worst organised or totally disorganised."<sup>8</sup>

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7. Rosa Luxemburg, (The Mass strike) Quoted in Paul Mattick, Anti-Bolshevik Communism (London: Merlin Press, 1978), p. 44.

8. Ibid., p. 44

This difference regarding the significance of organisation for the revolution involves two different conceptions regarding form and content of the organisation itself. For Lenin the only serious principle of organisation for the movement is the most absolute secrecy, the strictest selection of members, the forming of professional revolutionists. 'Once these qualities are present, something more still is assured than 'democracy' namely complete comradely confidence among the revolutionists. And this 'more' is for US unconditionally necessary, for with us ... there can be no question of replacing it by democratic control. It is a great mistake to believe that the impossibility of a real democratic control makes the members of the revolutionary organisation uncontrollable. They have no time to think of puppet like forms of democracy, but they feel their responsibility very keenly. '9

By means of the rules of organisation Lenin wanted to "forge a more or less sharp weapon against opportunism. The deeper the source of opportunism lies, the sharper must be

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9. V.I. Lenin, What is to be done? Trans. by S. V. and Patricia Utechin (London : Oxford University Press, 1970).

this weapon." <sup>10</sup> This weapon was Centralism, the strictest discipline in the party, the complete subordination of all activity to the instructions of the Central Committee. Of course Rosa Luxemburg was capable of tracing this "night watch man spirit" <sup>11</sup> of Lenin's to the special situation of the Russian intellectuals, but "it is false to think" (She writes against Lenin) "that the still impracticable majority rule of the workers within their party organisation may be replaced by a sole-mastery on the part of the central authority of the party, and the lacking public control on the part of the working masses over the acts and omissions of the party organs would just as well be replaced by the inverted control of a Central Committee over the activity, of the revolutionary workers". <sup>12</sup> And even though the self leadership of the workers should lead to blunders and false steps, Rosa Luxemburg is nevertheless ready to take all this into the bargain, for she is convinced that "even mistakes which a truly revolutionary labour movement commits are, in historical-perspective, immeasurably more fruitful and valuable than the

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10. V.I. Lenin, One Step forward, Two steps backward (Moscow: Foreign language Publishing House, 1944)
11. Rosa Luxemburg, (Organisation Question Of the Russian Social Democracy, Neue Zeit, 1905) Quoted in Paul Mattick, Anti-Bolshevik Communism (London: Merlin Press, 1978), p. 45
12. Ibid., p. 46.

infallibility of the very best Central Committee."<sup>13</sup>

Both Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky feared the wide gulf that came to separate the vast masses of unskilled and underpaid workers from the privileged "labour aristocracy" and bureaucracy, a gulf which impeded the growth of the nation as a whole. "The Revolution Betrayed"<sup>14</sup> was Trotsky's critical reaction to a crucial moment of the Stalin era.

Official Moscow had just proclaimed that the Soviet Union had already achieved Socialism. Until recently it had contented itself with the more modest claim that only "the foundations of Socialism had been laid". What emboldened Stalin to proclaim nothing less than the advent of Socialism was the progress of industrialisation, the first superficial signs of the consolidation of collective farming and the nation's fresh relief at having left behind the famines and massacres of the early 1930s.

Yet, this was also the time of growing inequality, when discrepancies between high and low earnings widened rapidly,

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13. Ibid., p. 46.

14. Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed (New York : Peoneer Publishers, 1957).

when "socialist competition" degenerated into a wild scramble for privileges and necessities of life. A new hierarchical organisation was taking shape. It was elaborately graded, with ranks, titles and prerogatives sharply differentiated and with every rung on the multiple steep ladders of authority marked out with bizarre precision. The bureaucratic tutelage over science, literature and the arts grew unbearably tyrannical. In every field the State exercised absolute power provocatively and brazenly, glorifying itself as the supreme guardian of society.

Trotsky pointed out that the predominance of social forms of ownership did not yet constitute Socialism, even though it was its essential condition. Socialism presupposed an economy of abundance, it could not be founded on the want and poverty that prevailed in the Soviet Union and that led to the recrudescence of glaring inequality.

Lenin had, in his *State and Revolution*, wrested from oblivion the Marxian notion of the "withering away of the state" and Trotsky now defended the idea against Stalinist manipulation. He insisted that Socialism was inconceivable without the withering away of the state. It was from class conflict that the state had arisen, and it existed as an instrument of class



domination. Even in its lower phase Socialism meant the disappearance of class antagonism and of political coercion. Lenin had imagined the proletarian dictatorship as a "semi-state" only modelled on the commune of Paris, whose officials would be elected and deposed by vote and paid workers' wages, so that they should not form a bureaucracy estranged from the people. In backward and isolated Russia this had proved unworkable. All the same, the advance towards Socialism must be measured by the degree to which the coercive power of the state was on the decline. Massive political persecution and glorification of the state in themselves refuted the Stalinist claim about the achievement of Socialism.

Trotsky saw the mainspring of Stalinism in the defence of privilege, which above all gave a certain unity to all the disparate aspects of Stalin's policy, connecting its "Thermidorian" spirit with its diplomacy and the debasement of the Comintern. The ruling group shielded the interests of an acquisitive minority against popular discontent at home and the shocks of revolutionary class struggle abroad. Yet, Trotsky firmly rejected the view that the bureaucracy was a "new class" or that the Soviet masses were exploited by "State Capitalism". The bureaucracy lacked the social homogeneity

of any class which owed its place in society to the ownership and the command of the means of production. The exercise of mere managerial functions had not turned the directors of the Soviet industry and state into such a class, even though they treated both state and industry as if these were their private domains. The inequality which Stalinism promoted was still confined to the sphere of private consumption. The privileged groups were not permitted to appropriate means of production. Unlike any exploiting class, they could not accumulate wealth in the form that would give them command over the labour of others and enable them to appropriate more. Even their privileges and power were bound up with the national ownership of productive resources. They had, therefore to defend that ownership and thereby to perform a function which, from the Socialist view point, was necessary and progressive. For, argued Trotsky, none of the Socialist revolutions would be able to abolish inequality immediately. Even in the wealthiest industrial state, the post revolutionary situation would be marked by a relative scarcity, which would compel it, under communist government, to maintain differential wages and salaries. Hence, "the tendencies of bureaucratism... would every where show themselves even after a proletarian revolution".<sup>15</sup>

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15. Ibid., pp. 57-59

A revolutionary government had to maintain inequality and had to struggle against it, and it had to do both. It had to provide incentives to technicians, skilled workers, and administrators in order to ensure the proper functioning and the rapid expansion of the economy; yet it had also to aim at reduction and the eventual abolition of privileges. Ultimately, this contradiction could be resolved only by an increase in social wealth, surpassing all that mankind had hitherto dreamt of, and by attainment of so high and universal a level of education that the gulf between manual and intellectual work would vanish. Before these conditions are fulfilled, the revolutionary state assumes "directly and from the very beginning a dual character" it is socialist in so far as it defends social property in the means of production; and it is bourgeois in so far as it directs an unequal, differential distribution of goods among the members of society.<sup>16</sup>

Trotsky contends that the Stalinist government had preserved the "dual character" inherent in any revolutionary government; but that the bourgeois element in it had gained immense weight

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16. Ibid., See in Particular Chap. II 'Socialism and State'.

and power at the expense of the socialist element. The bureaucracy is by its very nature "the planner and protector of in equality. Nobody who has wealth to distribute ever omits himself. Thus out of a social necessity there has developed an organ which has far outgrown its socially necessary function, and has become an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism.... The poverty and cultural backwardness of the masses have again become incarnate in the malignant figure of the ruler with the great club in his hand."<sup>17</sup>

Trotsky, however, went on to speak of the bureaucracy's metamorphosis into a new bourgeoisie, though as being one of the several possibilities. In the long run either the socialist or the bourgeois element must prevail. The continuous growth of inequality was a danger signal. The managerial groups would not indefinitely content themselves with consumer privileges. Sooner or later they would seek to form themselves into a new possessing class by expropriating the state and becoming the share holding owners of trusts and concerns.

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17. Ibid., p. 111.

Events disproved this hypothesis about the transformation of the bureaucracy into a new possessing class already in the 1930's; but even more so during and after the Second World War. The post-war industrialisation, the immense expansion of the Soviet working class, the growth of mass education, and the reviving self-assurance of the workers tended to subdue the "bourgeois element" in the state; and in the post Stalin period the bureaucracy was compelled to make concessions to the egalitarianism of the masses. Though the managers, the administrators, the technicians and the skilled workers remained privileged groups, the gulf between them and the great mass of the toilers was narrowing in the middle and late 1950s and the early 1960s.

Trotsky formulated his programme, of a "political revolution" against the germ of this new possessing class. "There is no peaceful outcome", he wrote. "The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its positions without a fight ... no devil has ever yet voluntarily cut off its own claws." "The proletariat of a backward country was fated to accomplish the first Socialist revolution. For this historic privilege it must, according to all the evidence, pay with a second supplementary revolution - against bureaucratic absolutism." He argues for

"a political, not a social revolution" - a revolution, that is, which would overthrow the Stalinist system of government, but would not change the existing property relations.<sup>18</sup>

This is how he formulated the programme of the revolution :

It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very method of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy. A restoration of the right of criticism and genuine freedom of elections is the necessary condition for the further development of the country. This assumes a revival of freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of Bolshevik and a renaissance of the trade union. The bringing of democracy into industry means a radical revision of plans in the interest of the toilers. Free discussion of economic problems will decrease the overhead expenses of bureaucratic mistakes and zigzag. Expensive play things - Palaces of the Soviets, new theatres, showy metro subways - will be abandoned in favour of workers' dwellings, Bourgeois norms of distribution will be confined within the limits of strict necessity, and in step with the growth of social wealth, will give way to Socialist equality. Ranks will be immediately abolished. The tinsel of decorations will go into the melting pot. Youth will receive the opportunity to breathe freely, criticise, make mistakes and grow up. Science and art will be free of their chains. And, finally, foreign policy will return to the traditions of revolutionary internationalism."<sup>19</sup>

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18. Ibid., pp. 2712

19. Ibid., p. 273

Here Trotsky is cautious not to speak of any "abolition" of "bourgeois norms of distribution". These were to be maintained, but only "within the limits of strict necessity" and dispensed with gradually, "with the growth of social wealth". The political revolution was thus to leave some privileges to managers, administrators, technicians and skilled workers. He, therefore, envisaged a drastic curtailment, not the obliteration of bureaucratic and managerial privilege.

Bukharin, too, talked of the possible degeneration of the Proletarian dictatorship. Bukharin stressed that proletarian cadres could not develop before the revolution. The intellegensia and other non-proletarian elements must play a leading role. In his major work published in 1921 he referred to the ancient Inca state in which "there was a regulated and organised economy, in the hands of a gentry - priesthood class, an intelligensia of a kind which controlled everything, ran everything and operated the state economy as a dominant class, sitting over the top of all the others."<sup>20</sup> Here, Bukharin has

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20. Bukharin Quoted in Alec Nove, Political Economy and Soviet Socialism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), p.86

in mind a group of rulers of non-proletarian origin.

However he goes on to contend - "even proletarian origin, even the most calloused hands.... is no guarantee against turning into a new class. For if we imagine that a section of those who have arisen out of the working class becomes detached from the mass of workers and congeals into a monopoly position in its capacity of ex-works, they too can become a species of caste, which would also become a new class.... After the revolution the old order collapses, the old (ruling) class is scattered and deformed, and out of it can arise a new class.... How can we struggle against it? The answer will lie in the quantitative balance of cultural forces..... But it is possible that the first battalions which the working class sends into higher education will become a close corporation which... though of worker origin, will dominate through its monopoly of education. This would be a new class. It is, therefore, vital not to let the cadres become a monopoly caste." 21

In 1922, in another article, Bukharin raises the issue of administrative cadres. "The workers can not be other than a class culturally deeply suppressed by the whole capitalist regime." Consequently this:

Culturally oppressed class cannot develop (its culture) so as to prepare itself for the organisation of all society. It can be ready to prepare itself for the destruction of the old world. It must remake its nature, and ripen....only in the period of its dictatorship. Hence additional costs of the proletarian revolution....unknown in general to the bourgeois revolution. 22

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21. Ibid., p.87.

22. Ibid., p.87.



But then, how does the proletariat none the less create its cadres of political ideologues and leaders ? Inevitably, the leaders tend to come from the bourgeois intelligensia and he notes that the cultural gap between such leaders and the proletarian masses is very wide, much wider than between the bourgeoisie and its leaders. But he sees also the existence or emergence of a whole stratum of "worker bureaucrats" such as exist in British trade unions or in the German unions and Social democracy.

When the proletariat seizes power, it must inevitably utilise specialists who are hostile to it. The idea that this can be avoided is utopian and impracticable. However this "situation contains within it a major danger, inevitable in a Proletarian revolution -- the danger of the degeneration of the Proletarian state and the Proletarian party.<sup>"23</sup> Bukharin therefore, seems to see, as Lenin did in 1921, the danger in the form of the uncultured proletariat losing out to the culturally superior alien classes or adopting their ways. But he did not see further than this:

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23. Ibid., p.87.

The cultural backwardness of the worker masses especially in conditions of general misery, when nolens volens the administrative and leadership apparatus has to receive many more consumers' goods than the ordinary worker, gives rise to the danger of a very substantial divorce from the masses even of those part of the cadres which emerged from the working masses themselves. <sup>24</sup>

Classes become deformed by the revolution.

Cut off from the masses cadres could join their more cultured colleagues and together make the "germ of the new ruling class."

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24. Ibid., p.88.

ALIENATION AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The alienation of State uniquely condenses all questions of socio-political alienation. In Capitalism, the state is an abstraction in political life on the same plane that value is in economic life.<sup>1</sup> The former is an abstract product of alienated political activity, and the latter is an abstract product of alienated productive activity. Just as value becomes a power over man when realised in the concrete forms of commodity, capital, money etc., the State exercises power over him, when expressed in the real institutions of government - in legislatures, executive agencies, political parties, constitutions and laws.

Like value, the State expresses the alienated relations of Capitalist society. It is based on a spurious equality of man, in this case, his common citizenship. Like commodities man's political products through their appropriation under conditions of alienation, have acquired a life and movement of their own, a metamorphosis which carries them into and out of various forms independent of man's will.

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1. Bertell Ollman, Alienation : Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.216

The question that absorbed Marx was the disruption of man who appears in two roles, although in one and the same person : as a member of the "Civil Society" (bourgeois) and of the "political community" (citoyen). In the former case we have to deal with economic individuals - products of bourgeoisie society and in the latter with members of a political community : the State.. This duality of roles is itself the result of man's alienated existence. It is because men are in conflict in their real life that they must solidarise in an ideal and false life as formally equal citizens :

The civil society and the state are separated from each other. Consequently the citizen of the state is also separated from the citizen who is a member of the civil society. Man must, therefore, himself succumb to an essential split. As a real citizen he finds himself with a dual organization : the bureaucratic - it constitutes the external formal definition of the State being something that is outside it, the ruling authority which has no points of contact with the citizen or his independent reality - and the social, within the organisation of civil society. But in the latter he finds himself as a private man outside the state, this organisation having no points of contact with the political state as such.<sup>2</sup>

The state is, thus a second and illusory society.

Although the governing principle of the capitalist society

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2. Karl Marx, Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right . Collected works, p. 494

is economic (as opposed to the essentially regulative principle of Feudal Society), it can't be divorced from the political framework in which it operates. The task of "universal human emancipation" must be formulated "in the political form of the emancipation of the worker" which implies a practically critical attitude towards the state. In other words, a radical transformation and ultimate abolition of the state is an <sup>withers away & not abo-</sup> ~~wished~~ essential condition of the realization of the Marxian Programme.

However, would the mere abolition of the Capitalist state and the destruction of the legal system solve the problem? To conceive the task of transcendence simply in political terms could result in "the re-establishing of 'society' as an abstraction vis-a-vis the individual" which would re-establish alienation in a different form.

Here, one should keep in mind the distinction made by Marx between Communism as a political movement which is confined to a particular stage and communism as comprehensive social practice. His position is that Communism "of a political nature"<sup>3</sup> is still affected by the estrangement of man.

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3. Marx & Engels, Collected Works. Suppl. Vol.I, pp. 304-5.

For, as a negation of private property, it is a form of mediation. It sustains its position by negating its opposite. It is a "negation of negation". for it negates private property which is itself a "negation of human essence". Thus it is not a "self-originating-position but rather a position originating from private property."<sup>4</sup> It, therefore, means that so long as this mediation remains, some kind of alienation goes with it. It turns into comprehensive social practice only "when the real individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his every day life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species being; and when he has recognised and organised his power as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as political power."<sup>5</sup>

Turning toward the reality of existing Socialist countries we find an ossified political structure coupled with a bureaucratic management of economy as the twin pillars of alienation inflicted on the people in these post-capitalist societies. Here we should distinguish two sets of problems :

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4. See Marx's VI Thesis on Feuerbach.

5. Karl Marx, On the Jewish Question, p. 31

- a) the questions of alienation in existing socialist countries ;
- b) the inferences that can be drawn about the future Communist society from the experience of alienation in a Socialist society.

Rudolf Bahro's book entitled "The Alternative in Eastern Europe"<sup>6</sup>, is a significant move in this direction. A preliminary point about it is that Bahro proceeds from the premise that there does exist a desirable socialist alternative to "actually existing socialism".<sup>7</sup> Unlike so many "dissidents" in and from Eastern Europe and USSR, whose bitter experiences have led them to reject Socialism altogether and often to turn into fierce reactionaries and apostles of Cold War. Bahro remain

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6. Rudolf Bahro, The Alternatives in Eastern Europe (Verso, 1984)

7. Ibid., p. 22. Bahro Characterises existing Socialist Countries as 'proto-socialist' i.e. they have socialism in an embryonic stage. He rejects the term 'early Socialist', by analogy with the first phase of capitalist era, for in early capitalism the fundamental features of the latter fully developed capitalist formation were already present. While in this case Socialisation as the decisive characteristic of Socialism as the formation is still completely entailed by etatism.

in this book the uncompromising advocate of a socialist vision of the future and above all concerned to explore how the obstacles to its realization may be overcome.

The first part of Bahro's work covers familiar ground, in an analysis, of the "non-capitalist road to industrial society" and its second part important ground, in an "anatomy of actually existing socialist societies", its third part begins from an insistence that "today Utopian thought has a new necessity" and yet proceeds to something very unlike Utopianism, indeed to a relatively detailed outline of a practical and possible Communist society.

#### THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

There are two issues, at the level of theory - (i) Bahro argues that there is an over-emphasis on the concept of Capitalist private property and its abolition in the works of Marx and Engels. (ii) There is no account of the possible positive role (what he calls "economic organizational" and "cultural educational" functions) of the state apparatus.

If we consult the Gotha Programme to see what Marx understood by Socialism, we find a very summary presentation



of its particular features. Marx indicates the general nature of Socialism with the remark that it is the first phase of communism. It is therefore, not a demarcated or autonomous formation. Bahro argues that Marx and Engels never sought to provide definitions for text books. But when they were pressed to define their communism, then they would say nothing else than that it was the "Abolition of private property".

Marx saw the preconditions for Socialism and Communism not in the achievements of private property as such, but rather in the specific achievements of Capitalist private property, which embraces a tremendous complex of objective and subjective factors.

For Marx the pre-conditions for Socialism and Communism materialised within Capitalism. They were conceptualized as the Bourgeoisie's constantly necessary revolutionarizing of the means of production. In proceeding from the view that a theoretical foundation for the communist movement might lie in the economic anatomy of Capitalism, that Communism might be equated with the abolition of private property, Marx was already committed to a position, from which it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate the problems of politics, the state and power and to countenance the possibility of other "non-capitalist"

roads to socialism. Because Marx placed all the emphasis in his conception of Communism on the abolition of private property and such interconnected processes as -

- (i) the immediate socialization of the means and conditions of production.
- (ii) the abolition of traditional division of labor.
- (iii) The appropriation of the means of production by the associated producer.
- (iv) and the eventual abolition of the capitalist world market he was unable to recognise that the transitional period of Socialism, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat might produce an indissoluble monolithic state machine.<sup>8</sup>

The "non-capitalist" road which has kept humanity on the move since 1917 raises completely different problems from those analysed by Marx.<sup>9</sup> It can't directly have the same

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8. Ibid., pp. 29-31.

9. Bahro uses the term 'non-capitalist' in a sense very different from one which is used in Soviet Literature on the third world. His use of the term is grounded in the legacy of the Asiatic mode of production.

perspective since it creates the preconditions for communism in a completely different way. The abolition of capitalist private property could only have a slight positive significance for a country like Russia, since there was little capitalist private property to abolish.

There is no striking antithesis between Marx's Communism and the actually existing socialism of the Soviet bloc, even from the theoretical stand point, than in the character of the state. For Marx, there was need to put an end to both the form and content of the State Machinery. The purpose of domination and suppression penetrates the entire construction of this machine. It cannot thus be made into an instrument of emancipation. It must be overthrown. For this reason the commune had immediately to take its place and not just when Communism was achieved. The commune was a revolution against the state itself. The state is always at best an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy. This state is to be thrown off by a generation reared in new free social conditions. Marx and Engels thus did not have in mind any economic organizational role for the state - not even a "cultural educational function."<sup>10</sup>

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10. Ibid., p. 36

Turning to the reality of existing socialist countries, however, it seems to be becoming ever more impossible simply to smash the state machine. In the countries of actually existing socialism the state machine played a predominantly creative role for a whole and decisive period. The Stalinist apparatus did perform a task of "economic organization" and also one of "cultural education." -both of these on the greatest of scale.

What, then, prevented Marx from seriously discussing the possibility of such a development? Bahro argues that the Hegelian tradition and a Europocentrism that was scarcely avoidable may have been responsible for the way Marx focussed his attention too one-sidedly on Capitalist private property and saw the entire past and future historical process as passing through this nodal point.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the problem of Modern state is concerned Marx was in the first place burdened from the beginning by the decisive act in which he served himself from Hegel. His task in breaking away from Hegel consisted of reversing the Hegelian relationship of state and society, in which the state

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11. Ibid., p.43

was society's highest "real" and rational existence and showing that the state was simply the political expression of the actual life of society with its conflicting tendencies of interest. The next step for him was to reveal the real structure and dynamic of bourgeois society from the standpoint of economy - the relations of production. The post revolutionary Bourgeois state never knew any functions as organiser of production.

In fact the very idea of this stood in complete antithesis to the essence of competitive capitalism, whose entire mode of production was based on the initiative of private capitalists. Everywhere this system broke through its limits, as a function of its own spontaneous tendencies Marx put forth the perspective of Socialist Socialization. This conjuncture has shown such persistence that many Marxists observers of present state monopoly in the west are content to note that everything that has happened since the transition to monopoly simply represents the evermore perfect preparation for this socialization.

The other element in the Hegelian tradition is the methodological hypothesis of the unity of the logical and the historical. Although Marx certainly adopted it in a critical manner, in many respects it still had its effect even inspite of

this general distancing. This is demonstrated in the way Marx often dispenses with certain tendencies he has so genially grasped, since what appears finished from the logical point of view must immediately be historically finished too. But what creeps in here, in the way of neglect of the quantitative aspect, adds up to a qualitative misjudgement. On the one hand, of the readiness of the productive forces for a victorious proletarian overthrow and on the other hand an overall capacity for extension shown by Capitalist relations of production.

As essential consequence of this is the "overvaluation" or even "absolutizing" of the role of Capitalist private property.<sup>12</sup> Bahro analysis this in the context of the concept of alienation.

Marx proceeded in general from the conception that Capitalist private property i.e. capitalist alienation contained all earlier alienation raised to a higher level in itself. In the Grundrisse he expressly refers to the capital relation as 'the most extreme form of alienation' and interprets it as a necessary transition point 'which already contains in itself'.... the dissolution of all limited (i.e. precapitalist) "presuppositions of production"

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12. Ibid., p. 44-46

In the celebrated section on the "Precapitalist Economic Formation" Marx analyses the whole development from the dissolution of the primitive community through to the threshold of primitive accumulation precisely from the standpoint of this result. He shows the logico-historical sequence in the separation of the producers from all their material conditions of production. In this connection he introduces the implicit assumption that each higher level, even if it does not always concretely appear as having proceeded from the lower, still always contains within it the results of the preceding levels. In this perspective abolition of Capitalist private property must resolve all the inherited historical contradictions in one unitary process. It is only this assumption which gives validity to the early thesis of Economic and philosophical manuscripts that Communism, the positive supersession of private property as self-estrangement is by that token "the complete restoration of man to himself as a social being i. e. human being".

In reality however even in Europe the oldest layers of oppression and social inequality were not so totally abolished by higher formations as Marx's logical development assumed.

The idea of abolition of private property is, therefore, overburdened if we extend it to include the overcoming of relations that ultimately do not rest on private property and have never completely been absorbed into it, even in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

### EXISTING SOCIALISM : DEFORMATION OR DEVIATION?

What accounts for the rise of a dictatorial state apparatus in the post-revolutionary situation in countries such as the USSR? This involves an analysis of the non-

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13. This, argues Bahro, involves three 'residues' which originally and until today are characteristic of societies in which private property has not come to develop as the dominant relation of production
- (a) The exploitation and oppression of women in the overall patriarchal family structure with which it is connected i. e. the dominance of the man
  - (b) The dominance of the town over the country, which has to provide it with food and luxuries from the surplus labor of its population.
  - (c) The exploitation and oppression of the manual worker (whoever has to perform principally physical, schematic, executive work) by the mental worker (whoever performs predominantly intellectual, creative, planning and managerial activity).



capitalist road to industrialization in terms of the legacy of the Asiatic mode of Production. The October Revolution is thus reconceptualized as the first anti-imperialist revolution in what was still a predominantly precapitalist country. The emergence of new relations of domination embodied in state machine are accounted for as being historically necessary for the economic development of USSR.

At the beginning of the 19th century Russia, a backward country under the despotic rule of the Tsar, had three formations superimposed on one another: at the bottom the Asiatic i.e. the Tsarist bureaucracy together with the orthodox state church and the peasantry. On top of this, since the abolition of serfdom, an only half liquidated feudal formation. This one had never fully severed its links with the earlier first formation. It comprised of ex-landlords and ex-serfs in conflict over the land. Upper most and concentrated in a few towns was the modern Capitalist formation: Industrial bourgeoisie and wage labourers.

The agricultural base was highly fragmented and the society was characterized by an extremely heterogeneous

national composition of its colonialist multi-national state. Its political traditions were rooted in the Tsarist autocracy and the psychology of the masses to a large extent was still trapped in primary patriarchy.

Bahro argues that given the peculiarity of the Russian situation- balance of its class forces and its entire economy - the Bolsheviks led by Lenin had to take a very different attitude toward the role of the state in the transition period than that of Marx. The task in the post-revolutionary period was first and foremost the rapid industrialisation of the Russian Society - the tool for creating the economic foundations of Socialism which were lacking. Given this massive task of restructuring the economy and hastening the process of industrialisation, the construction of a bureaucratic state apparatus was unavoidable. The state repression in countries of actually existing socialism is therefore, in the final analysis, a function of their industrial underdevelopment. Lenin recognized this and gave Marxism a new twist that had not been foreseen from the orthodox stand point.<sup>14</sup>

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14. Ibid., p.93

The anti-state and anti-authoritarian stand of many western intellectuals does have its historical justification in countries that have already industrialized, where the material conditions for the demise of the state are maturing. But those people who are just in the process of organizing themselves for industrialization cannot abandon this instrument and their state can be nothing other than bureaucratic.<sup>15</sup>

Thus Bahro writes "the peoples of the backward countries" require not only revolution, but also "a strong state, often one that is in many respects despotic, in order really, to overcome the inherited inertia".

What causes concern at this point, however, is precisely the fact that the absolutist state in these societies has shown very slight signs of relenting. What explains the obstinate persistence of the Stalinist superstructure even when now the material preconditions of Socialism are at least achieved far above that minimum which Lenin once took to be necessary? Above all, that the measure of

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15. Ibid., p.129

accumulation needed for Socialism is not determined within the system itself but rather in the so called economic competition with Capitalism.<sup>16</sup> Both the quantity of needs produced and satisfied by western industry and their quality directly effect Soviet planning. The tremendous burden of military expenditure which is kept on a par with that of NATO only at the cost of a far greater share of national income might well be a decisive handicap. The arms race is the real issue at stake in "economic competition."

Bahro, thus, perceives the political, social and economic pressures the world market exerts on the pace and orientation of accumulation in the East European countries. Here he presents a gripping theoretical analysis of what underlies the theory of "economic competition between the two systems". In fact, one of the images he uses repeat a prediction of Trotsky's half a century ago: Such "competition" resembles the fable about the race between the tortoise and the hare in which the hare, in spite of his

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16. Ibid., p.134

vastly superior "cruising speed", is compelled to note that even after ten "technological revolution" and a hundred "new consumer goods", the tortoise is always first at the finishing line.

The problem, therefore, cannot be reduced in any way to a difference between the ideal of Socialism and its reality. It is not one of deformation but instead, of deviation. The societies of actually existing socialism can at best be described as proto-socialist i. e. these societies have socialism in an embryonic stage.

#### ALIENATION AND CONTINUING DIVISION OF LABOR

Essentially Bahro's position is that the East European Societies have not emancipated people : individuals are still subject to 'socially determined limitations on their development. The ultimate source of social in-equality is the social division of labor; which confines one section of society to specific tasks related to the reproduction of material resources for all society.<sup>17</sup> This social division

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17. This notion is much broader one than that of manual labor. Non-manual labor can be as repetitive and alienating as manual labor)

of labor means that only a minority can enjoy access to spheres of activity which Bahro calls "general labour" as opposed to "specific labour" - those activities which permit the development and realization of full human personality.

In this connection Bahro uses two concepts which may appear "idealist" at first sight but are profoundly materialist in reality : "psychologically productive labour" and "psychologically unproductive labour". Integrating, at the same time, the dimension of the inextricable unity of "production - communication" in the social activity of humanity, Bahro demonstrates that any social division of labor is inevitably, accompanied by differentiated access to information. Exclusively fragmentary, specific, and limited information for the "producers" in the strict sense of the term; general and increasingly universal information for those who devote themselves to "general labour".

These two information systems, parallel to the two basic social activities, generate two systems of education of children from the earliest flowering of their intelligence,

a stifling one for the children of toilers, a stimulating one for the children of the privileged. This, in turn, powerfully contributes to the reproduction of social inequality. Excuse that distribution of individuals to various spheres in Actually existing socialism reflects the natural distribution of aptitude and talent, must be decisively rejected, for, differences in capacity for education are for the most part produced in the course of childhood socialization and this is dictated by the prevailing division of labor. There are two closely related mechanism which prevent manual worker from access to social synthesis (i) underdevelopment of motivation to learn (ii) a continuous blocking of a break through to participation in social synthesis.<sup>18</sup>

Now if traditional division of labor is the source of social inequality, it follows that the focal point of the conflict of interests in society must move successively from the distribution of compensation for labor towards

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18. Rudolf Bahro, The Alternatives in Eastern Europe (Verso, 1984), p.178

the distribution of labor itself once the means of subsistence are by and large secured. Competition for the appropriation of activities favourable to self-development, for appropriate positions in the multi-dimensional system of social division of labor has become the specific driving force of economic life characteristic of Actually existing socialism. The prevailing order of selection criteria both in matters of education and occupation of privileged jobs and management position is - subservience to those above, severe discipline towards those below and only in the third place, competence. The result is that productive and creative elements suffer from an increase in mediocrity, indeed incompetence, dishonourable behaviour and insecurity in official position.

The vast expansion of the productive forces effected by the industrial revolution of 19th century Capitalism, together with the abolition of bourgeois private property in certain countries in the 20th century, are indispensable, but not at all sufficient preconditions for the inauguration



of a Socialist society. The latter demands (in addition to a social surplus product extensive enough to eliminate the material exigencies that made the existence of the old privileged ruling classes inevitable) systematic and deliberate efforts to abolish the social division of labor. If this division is maintained or petrified, as is manifestly the case in the countries of East Europe, then society itself becomes frozen midway between class society and class-less society. The root of the evil and the historic meaning of bureaucratic dictatorship, is the totality of post capitalist mechanisms and institution which maintain the monopoly of administration and management in all spheres of social life the monopoly of "general labour", in the hands of a privileged minority.

Bahro thus reverses the link between material privilege and the monopoly of access to management and administrative functions that Mechanist Marxists have generally attempted to establish, independent of specific historical conditions. It is not the privileges that produce

the monopoly, but the monopoly that secretes the privileges. Thus the masters of the Stalinist apparatus did not "conspire" to expropriate the working class politically, because they wanted to defend already acquired material privileges. Rather it is because they expropriated the working class politically and thus eliminated any possibility of mass control over the mode of distribution, that they were able little by little to appropriate ever more exorbitant material privileges and ended by creating institutions that allow them to conserve and reproduce both the monopoly of power and the privileges.

#### NATURE OF BUREAUCRACY

Closely linked to a correct definition of the social (socio-economic) character of the East European countries is the question of a critical scientific analysis of the character of bureaucracy and its precise articulation with the post-capitalist system as it functions in these countries. Bahro's analysis of the same is rigorous, the condemnation is brilliant. Many passages could be cited. For instance :

"What the Soviet Union suffers from . . . are the misdeeds of apparatchiks and their 'superiors' (natchalniki), among whom the old patriarchate of the peasantry and the new patriarchate of the industrial despot are combined with party discipline to produce a kind of religious obeisance".

(226) "The historic function of the post-stalinist apparatus lies in its effort to prevent the peoples of East-Europe from progressing toward socialism" " Just as our Pedagogical Science has rediscovered the traditional conspiracy of authorities against the independence and imagination of children, in the form of the 'United collective of educators', our political education speaks to the people, down to the last street cleaner with a single voice : "We educate you so that you may remain ignorant' (Rainer Kurze). The masses 'assimilate' this into their consciousness to the extent that they manifest conformism."

Or : "Waste and shortages of material resources go hand in hand', under bureaucratic planning." (155)

"Edward Geirek deserves thanks for the honesty with which he summed up the problem of our societies after

the Polish crisis of December when he joined the two ends of the problem together : 'You work well and we will govern well' (176).

On the question of the specific relationships that determine the positions of the working class and the bureaucracy in the economic system, Bahro presents information which generally confirms the revolutionary Marxist analysis. For instance, he stresses that the intensity of labor and labor discipline in East Europe are inferior to those prevailing under the Capitalist mode of production, precisely because a generalized system of "right to work" and state guarantee of vital necessities functions on the whole in East Europe. "From the standpoint of political economy" Bahro writes "the workers... have greater possibilities to blackmail society as a whole than do the trade unions under the capitalist mode of production. Contrary to appearances, they exploit these possibilities, but can do so only in an unproductive manner, by reducing their efforts. This is less true for the lower layers, and least true for women,

who do the lion's share of piecework. But the majority of skilled workers determine the work pace in the factories through their own consensus".<sup>19</sup>

The major motor force in the realization of the plan thus, has to be "material incentives" for the bureaucrats, instead of creative initiatives by the masses, which are excluded by the social and political order. But these "material incentives for the bureaucrats" are oriented exclusively towards attempting to create the conditions for the realization of the plan and they increasingly function in a vacuum. Since the structure of the plan is predetermined and since material sources are constantly in short supply, "competition among bureaucrats" arises. They compete not in order to increase economic rationality, but in order to conquer important positions of political and administrative power, which is the only way to achieve greater access to material resources.<sup>20</sup>

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19. Ibid., p. 207

20. Ibid., p. 158

The object of the Plan, thus, is not society but state bureaucracy. The discipline of the plan becomes an end in itself as a way of subjecting people to the hierarchical rank order. Subjectivism is, therefore, the inevitable accompaniment of a planning that is scientific in form but rests on the dictated balancing of interests from above. There are two sources of subjectivism that overlap (i) the real particular interests from which the centre proceeds, (ii) the inadequate knowledge of social needs which its very structure prevents from representing in an adequate form.

Bureaucracy as the dominant form of management and work organization provides a specific human type of conservative mediocrity - people who can outshine through "creative" conformity, correct accomplishment of any orders they are given or unfruitful officiousness.

The bureaucratic centralist form of planning, under which what those at the top receive from below, is principally only passive, factual information and 'question', while what they hand down are active imperatives, stamps the mechanism by which tasks are allotted to individuals. It is a point of principle that people do not have to seek tasks for themselves, recognize and deal with problems but they are rather

assigned to tasks as duties. The means to deal with these tasks are accordingly also allotted on the basis of a balance sheet, and the longer this is, the more, even the most necessary resources are rationed <sup>21</sup>.

Taking up the formula of former Hungarian Prime Minister Andras Hegedus Bahro concludes: "The bureaucratic system is a system of organized irresponsibility".

Despite this a relatively higher rate of economic growth has ensued in non-capitalist countries following the Marxist - leninist tradition. It still reduces the quantitative growth less than it does qualitative. It is, therefore, significant to understand in search of an alternative how and why the power apparatus does not just get absolutely stuck in its vicious circle.

There are two reasons which are to be distinguished analytically even though it is difficult to disentangle them in political practice.

i) The apparatus' interest in self-preservation in the face of unfolding challenge of a world historical partner and opponent who is superior in material technique. Domestically the major dilemma is that the masses judge their

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21. Ibid., pp.213-14

promises less and less by the small steps forward that successive annual plans are supposed to give them and more and more by the absolute gap that separates the Soviet Union from the "Consumer paradise" of the late capitalist industrial states.

ii) The second as it were is a higher reason - higher than that is than the mere interest of self-preservation. What is involved here in the case of parties based on a certain world view is observance of the preservation of an original inspiration, which counts as one of their conditions of existence. If they publically renounced the idea, they would immediately be swept away. Pursued by an inescapable legitimacy complex they need a distorted Marxism as their daily bread, and they must even believe in it themselves at least in certain moments, for the sake of their own psychological survival.

The bureaucracy, thus, has long since ceased to be merely a superficial and alien form. It has become as it were the natural political form of existence of a major



group of people with pronounced special interests. The general interest of society now has to find a way through these special interests, if it is to be officially recognised as such.

From the political economic point of view, this tends to stand in an antagonistic relationship to the immediate producer - including the specialists. With regard to state property, as the domain of this polit -bureaucratic and administrative power of disposal, the workers continue to stand in a proletarian position. People and functionaries - this is the unavoidable dichotomy of every protosocialist society.

#### THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION :

The task which Bahro aims at is the overcoming of subalternity, the form of existence and mode of thought of little people. He sees the way through in one of his most memorable but also arguable concepts: that of the contemporary production of "surplus consciousness".<sup>22</sup> He defines

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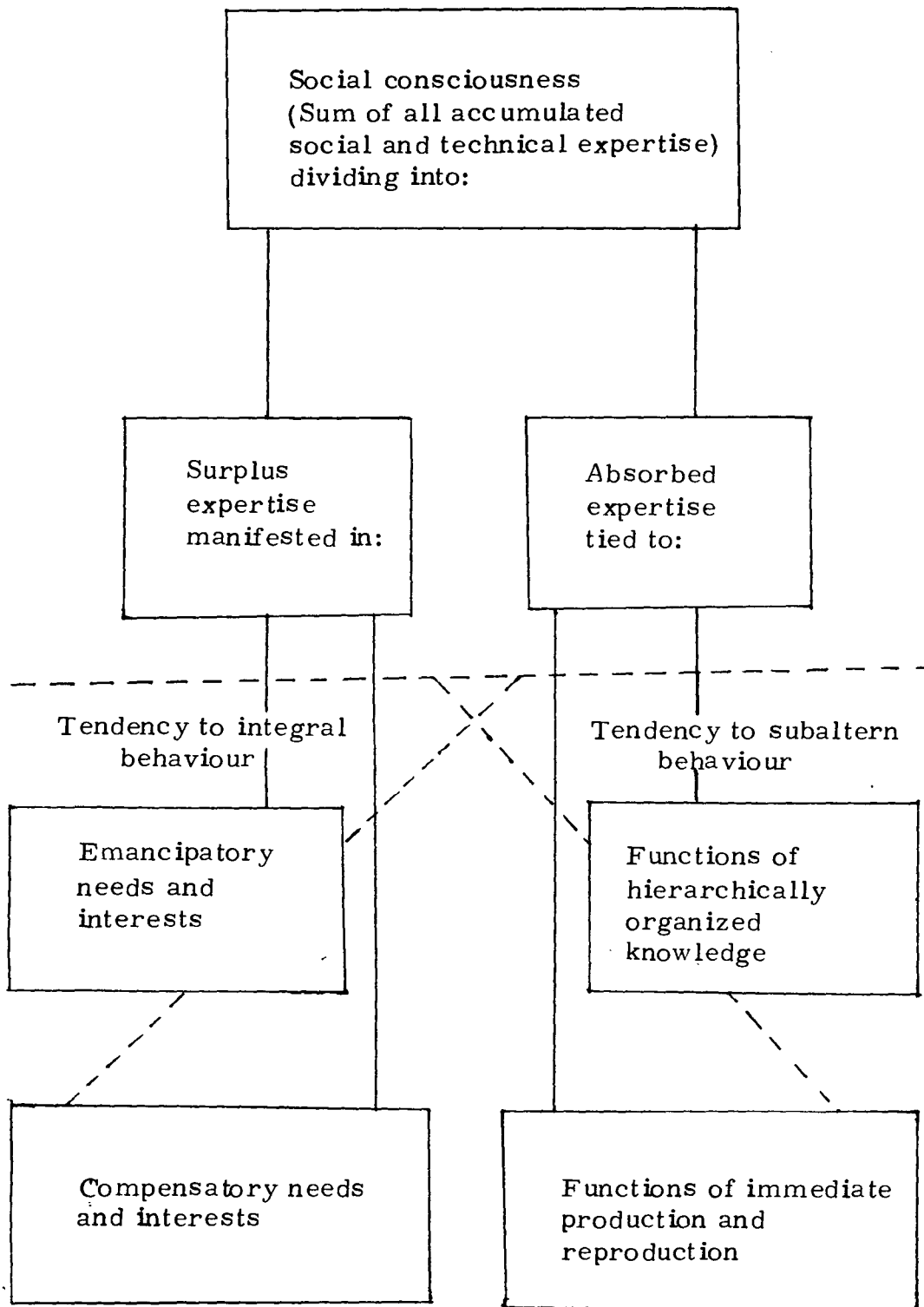
22. Consciousness here is used not in its function of reflection but rather as a factor of social being : Social consciousness considered in its quality as the precondition for all kind of human activity - as the embodiment of Society's subjective, productive force, and therefore, as a completely material and economic reality.

this as "an energetic mental capacity that is no longer absorbed by the immediate necessities and dangers of human existence and can thus orient itself to more distant problems".

There is obviously some truth in this as any comparison of the lives of most workers between, say, the mid-nineteenth and the late-twentieth centuries would show. Something important is then being indicated. But on any wider historical scale it can be reasonably argued that this "surplus consciousness" is a cultural and a material variable. There is no unilinear progression of "free consciousness", but on the contrary a highly variable and always complex relation between this sphere of mental possibility and the local imperatives of specific modes and types of production. And because this is so we cannot rest on the essentially quantitative notion of a surplus. For the consciousness and energy that are available beyond the immediately necessary tasks are not simple quanta; they are and must be related to the forms of consciousness and energy expended and generated in the primary tasks. This however, must not be extended to the point reached in an opposite tendency in Marxism, in which there is not free consciousness but only the labyrinthine monopoly of a

totalized ideology. Yet there can be no simple reliance either on the mere fact of a "surplus" and Bahro is much more convincing when he goes on to recognize this by distinguishing, usefully, between "compensatory" and "emancipatory" uses of this "surplus": that is, between drives to possession, consumption and power, which can be seen as partial substitutes for any certain and equitable share in human needs, and those other "non-exploitative" orientations towards self-realization and the collective realization, recognition, of the essential qualities of others.

The cultural Revolution is then for the conditions of the emancipatory and against the need for the compensatory activities. What is politically decisive is the relationship between the emancipatory interests and the consciousness tied up in the apparatus. As long as the apparatus is dominant subaltern behaviour is normal behaviour. Individuals subject themselves to alienated authority and seize on the rewards for good behaviour that are held out to them. In the cultural revolution the issue is to isolate this ruling apparatus from all the remaining fractions of social consciousness.



23. See Ibid. p. 315 for this diagram.

The major directions for cultural revolutionary intervention against the causes of subalternity and for the realisation of genuine equality, directions which mutually presuppose one another are :<sup>24</sup>

i) a redivision of labor according to the principle that everyone should perform an equal share in activities at the various functional level and the establishing of social equality between those carrying out the tasks of necessary labor by making it impossible for any person to be subsumed by a certain restricted or subordinate activity.

ii) The opening of unrestricted access for all to a general education (natural science & technique, society and art etc.) as the alternative to the differentiation of social strata according to levels of education and to socially incompetent bodies of specialists.

iii) Concern for a childhood which fosters and promotes the corresponding capacity of, and readiness for development instead of the education of a patriarchal society geared to economic performance.

iv) The establishment of conditions for a new communal life on the basis of autonomous group activities, around

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24. See Ibid., pp. 275-303; perspective for general Emancipation.

which fulfilling human relationships can be crystallized so as to put a limit to the isolation and loneliness of individuals in the isolate compartments of the modern world e.g. work, school, family and leisure.

v)           The socialization (democratisation) of the general process of knowledge and decision.

The cultural revolution challenges the alienated logic of a capitalist order and its non-capitalist derivatives. It is centred on the question of what a society needs to produce. Within the alienated logic this is necessarily defined, even by many socialists, in the quantitative terms of necessary objects. Plans and targets are then derived and collective production is organized throughout in these habitually alienated terms. Consciousness, individuality, the social order itself, are then seen as by products of this necessary production. Against this logic, the cultural revolution insists, that what a society needs to produce is as many as possible conscious individuals, capable of all necessary association. It aims at general emancipation i.e. the liberation of individuals from all socially determined

limitation on their development - to promote conditions for the activity of appropriation to become universal.<sup>25</sup>

If the conditions for such a change are present, it implies a clear idea also of its active subject i. e. where does the potential for this transformation lie? What is the subjective basis for a communist alternative? "New and higher cultures (he writes) are never created without the masses, without an essential change in their conditions of life, nor without their initiative, at a definite stage of maturity of the on going crisis. But in no known historical case did the first creative impulse in ideas and organization proceed from the masses; the unions, do not anticipate any new civilization." Those upon whom he relies to constitute the leading element, in social terms, of the movement for change, are the people who exercise managerial and "intellectual" functions in the societies of actually existing socialism and form the middle and higher echelons of the collective worker. The initiative for fundamental change, he writes, "can only proceed from those elements who are most bound up with the developmental functions and tendencies of the forces and relations of production". The intelligentsia must

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organize itself into a new forum: the Communist League. This instead of being organised as a super state apparatus must be organized as the "collective intellectual."<sup>26</sup> This league must avoid the recreation of a bureaucratic form of organization and the associated reconstitution of subalternity. It must nurture emancipatory interests and seek to create a consensus on broad alliance of all progressive social forces. It will replace the existing political organization, the party, which has become synonymous with the bureaucratic machine and is, therefore, unable to provide a basis for opposition to existing relations of domination.. Bahro categorically rejects party pluralism. He seems to believe that parties must represent distinct and antagonistic social classes and elements. In so far as such classes and ..social elements donot exist in the countries of actually existing socialism, except for the "class" conflict between the people and the party/state apparatus there is no basis for a plurality of parties.

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26. Bahro's use of the concept of 'collective intellectual' is inspired by that of Gramsci's concept of party as a 'collective intellectual'.



The notion that independent political groupings and parties can only have a meaningful existence if they are based on clearly defined Classes is unconvincing too simple and reductionist in stipulating that political activity can only be significant as a reflection of "pure" class representation; and that the alternative "political fragmentation of the workers" movement is only a phenomenon of groups of intellectuals with their claims to power and their rivalries".

This is not to say that a plurality of parties is a sufficient condition for the achievement of socialist democracy; and it may even be the case that it is not a necessary condition for radical changes to occur in the countries of actually existing socialism. To fasten on such plurality as paramount or critical may well be unduly rigid : much depends on the alternative, which in this case is League of Communists.

Theoretically a distinction should be made between plurality as a political necessity and plurality as an ideal i. e. , by choice. In the former case it is 'allowed' or adapted as being required under certain historical conditions. Hence, it is tolerated, though not celebrated and is to be ultimately

transcended. In the latter, however, plurality is cherished as an end in itself. It is customary to contrast the 'totalitarian' parties of the East with the 'democratic' parties of the West. Yet these are only different forms of appropriation of popular information and decision. The means of appropriation in the West is the procedure of electoral mandate, on an unsortable bundle of plans and policies, which deliver some years of monopoly of power.

ALIENATION AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

For Marx, Socialism is superior to Capitalism both in terms of productivity and the control exercised by the producer over the means of production. A socialist system is to foil the anarchic and naturalistic traits prevalent in a capitalist social formation. It does not allow for waste and restores to man as a collective producer control over the produce of this labor. Planning is, therefore, inextricably linked to it.

In the existing socialist economies, it is observed that the abolition of private property in the means of production has in no way meant their immediate transformation into the property of the people. Rather the whole society stands propertyless against its state machine. The monopoly of disposal over the state apparatus of production; surplus product; over the proportions of the reproduction process; over distribution and consumption has led to a bureaucratic mechanism with a tendency to kill off or privatise any individual initiative.

In this chapter we shall deal with the problem of labors' control; participation in planning and management;

incentives and individual initiative; the level of decentralisation etc. Primarily works of Włodzimierz Brus and Charles Bettelheim are analysed with passing reference to those of J. Kornai.

Brus characterises the Soviet economy as being an example of the "etatist" model wherein socialisation boils down to the transfer of the means of production to the ownership of the socialist state.<sup>1</sup> As a result the state has become virtually a monopolist in production and trade, and in employment. Extreme centralisation of planning and management is bound to mean the removal of the basis for any real forms of self management or participation by workers in the management of enterprises, and thus for direct economic democracy. The concept of effective planning is identified with the principle of commands and compulsions. Emphasis is laid on two stages of planning and a certain level of decentralisation. This static model of the Soviet Union is contrasted to the Yugoslav "Self-management Model".<sup>2</sup> Brus analyses the problems

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1. Włodzimierz Brus, Socialist Ownership and Political Systems. Trans. by R. A. Clarke. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 33

2. *Ibid.*, p. 31

involved in both these models in the light of the political systems in the respective countries. Consideration of the political aspect as an integral element of the analysis of the economic system, argues Brus, is justified today more than at any time, under every kind of political structure, owing to the important and continually growing economic role of the state.

The major conclusion which Brus derives is that socialisation of means of production in the Soviet Union and other European socialist countries has not been completed.<sup>3</sup> A distinction between public and social ownership is made.

Ownership is a social relationship realised through the relationship of people to things, in particular to the material factors in the process of reproduction of the material conditions of life. Every form of ownership requires a characterisation of its essence, exposing the social relationship which is formed on the basis of it. Private ownership means monopolisation of the means

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3. Ibid., pp. 94-95

of production in the hands of a particular sector of society, and thus deprives another sector of society of the means of production. The result is relations which, under conditions where there is personal freedom of the direct producer, take the form of hired labor. Every form of ownership can be private ownership, including public ownership, if it means the accumulation of defacto disposition over the means of production in the hands of an established group holding state power. In fact, argues Brus, under certain conditions, relations of dominance and subordination based on public ownership can be much more relentless, since:

i) The State, gathering in one centre disposition over all, or almost all the places and conditions of work, has in its hands an instrument of economic coercion the scale of which cannot be equalled by individual capitalists and corporations;

ii) The state can directly link economic coercion with political coercion.

Marx's critique of private ownership relates not to its specific forms, but to its essence, which is based on the opposition of labor to ownership and the subordination of the former to the latter. In every form of such subordination are to be found sources of alienation. Alienation cannot be overcome by replacing one system of subjection in work by another system, for instance, by replacing hired labor for an individual by hired labor for state. But by means of liquidation of all subordination of labor to ownership and the creation of "a union of free people working with the aid of social means of production and consciously expending their personal individual labor power as a single social labor power."<sup>5</sup>

The direction of evolution of the system of ownership of the means of production under Socialism is conditioned by the laws of development of productive forces. The conformity between these two is held to depend on the point that under Socialism public ownership acquires certain features which make it social ownership.

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5. Karl Marx, Capital Vol I

What does social ownership of 'means of production' mean to Brus then? Two criteria should be met: (i) the means of production must be employed in the interests of society and (ii) society must have effective disposition over the means of production it owns.<sup>6</sup> These two components are, however not of equal importance. The second component is decisive. For, a definition of what is and is not in the social interest is impossible - except in particularly simple cases when the choice is obvious. Whether public ownership in the socialist countries is or is becoming social ownership must cover primarily the problems of "democratism" in the management of the economy in the broadest sense.<sup>7</sup> The basic criterion of socialisation of the means of production is the criterion of democratism. We shall first analyse this in relation to the etatist model (USSR and other Peoples Democracies) and then in relation to the self management model (Yugoslavia).

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6. Oskar Lange, Economic and Social Paper 1930-1960 (Warsaw, 1961). Quoted in W. Brus, Socialist Ownership and Political Systems Trans. by R. A. Clarke (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p.94.

7. Ibid., p.30. The term 'Democratism' instead of simply 'democracy' is to emphasize that this is not only a matter of constitutional principles but also of the extent to which they are implemented in practice, of real 'democraticness.'



Brus contends that the etatist model has not met the criteria of socialisation. "Dictatorial" and monopolistic behaviour of the state has led to the failure to democratise the political system. Here, in the post-revolutionary situation, the change in the character of the relations of production takes place immediately, by means of a once-for-all act. In this sense one can speak of a static conception of socialisation. Against this, in the self management model, socialisation does not boil down to transition of the means of production into the ownership of the Socialist state. Here socialisation is a process rather than a once-for-all act. In distinction from the etatist model this is, thus, a dynamic conception of socialisation.<sup>8</sup>

What are the direct consequences of the etatist model for the character of production relations? The most important consequence is the fact that the function of the owner of the means of production is fulfilled directly by the state as such. The state being the political organisation of society, appears at the same time directly

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8. Ibid., p.63.

in the role of an economic agent. In fact an agent regulating not only relations within the enterprise but also the whole of the external factors which determine the positions of enterprises and households. Formally the work contract is between the enterprise and the worker, but the conditions of this contract, in particular the level and principles of remuneration, are determined by the state as the defacto employer.<sup>9</sup> It is in addition, not one of many employers but the dominant employer and for many categories of employees, the only one. Practically the whole of the economic surplus is concentrated in its hands ("the socialist surplus product") and thus it decides the future directions of development of production and employment. In other words the structure of the supply of jobs and also the extent and directions of demand for work. The state has disposition over the overwhelming mass of goods and services produced, and at the same time is the body determining the conditions on which these goods are made available to customers.

Brus discerns three essential components of the etatist model:

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9. Ibid., P. 40.

- i) the very broad area of nationalisation of the means of production;
- ii) the extreme centralisation of the system of functioning of the state economy ; and
- iii) the etatisation of the non-state collective forms of economy, above all of the co-operatives.

These he contends, create unfavourable premises for real disposition over the means of production by society for the display of creative initiative and other phenomena, which may reflect the attitude of co-owners. The centralistic organization of the economy necessarily requires its own vast bureaucratic apparatus. Thus, the whole weight of the problem of socialisation is shifted to the political plane.<sup>10</sup>

In singling out democratism in the disposition over the means of production as the paramount criterion of socialisation, Brus, underlines the connection between economic and political democratism, whenever public ownership is the pre-dominant form. But at the same

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10. Ibid., p. 41.

time draws attention to the different character of this connection in various models of socialism. This connection is strongest in the etatist model, since here society is deprived of the pre-requisites for disposition over the means of production directly in the economic sphere and retains only the possibility of control or influence by means of political instruments. The test of socialisation for the etatist model, then turns on whether the political system ensures subordination of the state to the will of society - both as regards setting out the direction of policy and as regards control over their implementation.

The etatist model of socialism "etatises" the party too. The party is more an organising agent rather than a political actor. This is expressed in the relationship of the party apparatus to the state and economic administration. The party apparatus is basically a component of the state and economic apparatus, but it is, at each level the superior component.

The centralistic economic monopoly and total political dictatorship, supported by a powerful

apparatus of physical coercion cannot create premises for that "Union of free men working with common means of production and consciously expending their personal individual labor power as a single social labor power". State ownership of means of production is necessary but not sufficient for socialization. Workers' self-management must go along with it. The Yugoslav model has made it possible, to a large extent, to take decisions at the work place, which fulfils largely the conditions of socialisations. But at the same time it has failed to "depoliticise the economy." <sup>11</sup>

The self management model consists not in including the worker self management as one of the many-components in the system but in giving it the key role - economically, socially and politically. The self-management model does not contain the postulate of elimination of the central economic level but it does contain the postulate of radical limitation of its functions to the role of coordinator of the autonomous operations of self-managing economic units.

11. Ibid., p.92. By 'depoliticisation' of the economy, Brus means leaving the centre a role which is primarily residual - to circumvent the economic omnipotence of the state. The central plan should merely guide the process of production rather than determine it.

The economic foundations of the process of socialisation of the means of production in the self-management model derives from the primary status of the idea of self-management, the characterisation of the role of the state in the etatist model and the demand for gradual transfer of disposition over the surplus to the direct producer. This can only mean to postulate the most far-reaching possible decentralisation of economic decisions, which in principle should be taken by self-managing enterprises. This concerns in particular decisions about the division of the surplus earned between consumption (workers incomes) and investment and about the use of investment allocation. This is the only way one can expect to implement the thesis that socialisation ultimately consists in liquidation of the situation where disposition over the means and results of production is based on external compulsion towards the direct producer. As long as the whole or predominant part of the surplus is at the disposition of the state, the etatist phase continues. Elements of etatism disappear and elements of socialisation grow commensurately with the change in favour of self managing enterprises. In other words, the economic essence of the process of socialisation consists

in limitation of the direct economic activity of the state by the introduction of pluralistic elements into the sphere of economic decision making and extension of the field of self-management decisions.

In gradually divesting general economic functions of their political character, in "depoliticisation of central economic direction", the state as a political power is less and less directly involved in productive activity. Depoliticisation consists in the general economic functions of the state, the role of central economic authority not deriving. This, however, is a general tendency which comes up against various concrete obstacles and cannot lead to total elimination of disposition over the means and results of production by state. One of the most important factors justifying redistribution of part of the surplus through the state budget is the necessity of liquidating economic backwardness in general and backwardness of certain regions in particular. (the influence of the transition to socialism in "conditions of immaturity")<sup>12</sup>.

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12. Schumpeter Quoted in Ibid., p. 38

Decentralisation of the system of functioning of economy, which is a pre-condition for self management, cannot go beyond certain limits defined by the economic and social rationality of central planning and the growing need in the modern world for internalisation of external costs and benefits. Recognition of this line of reasoning as correct leads logically to the acceptance of the thesis that socialisation does not invalidate nationalisation but includes it as a subordinate - necessary but not sufficient- feature.

For Brus, then, the problem of socialisation turns on the question of the democratic evolution of the state, of the political system. In this regard situation in Yugoslav may be better than that of USSR. But as a type of system, it belongs to the same category as the Soviet system. This, therefore, means that it does not meet the demands of the criterion of socialisation which Brus adopts.

In the analysis, of existing socialist economies, Bettelhiem, on the other hand, gives more attention to the ideological side of the problem.<sup>13</sup> His concern is the

13. Charles Bettelhiem, Economic Calculations and Forms of Property. Trans. by John Taylor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).



the analysis of social formations in transition between Capitalism and Socialism. The arguments focus on the importance and significance of monetary calculations on the one hand, and of scientific determination of social needs on the other in transitional societies. Such systems exhibit elements of both Capitalism and Socialism. The relative strength of these two sets of elements determines the direction of the system, i. e. whether it will progress towards socialism or revert back to capitalism.<sup>14</sup>

The state of his problematic is characterised, in particular by the gap separating the theoretical propositions formulated by Marx and Engels on the socialist mode of production from the reality of the "socialist countries". This is related in very general terms to a double error: theoretical propositions relating to developed socialist social formations have been understood as propositions relating to transitional social formations. Reciprocally every transitional social formation, even if it has abandoned the socialist road has been identified

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14. Charles Bettelheim, The Transition to Socialist Economy. Trans. by Brian Pearce (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1975), p.176

as a socialist social formation.<sup>15</sup>

The demarcation between monetary calculation and economic & social calculations, make obvious the necessity and possibility, of a "decentralisation" of economic planning that is radically different from the Pseudo-decentralisation that is at issue today in the East European countries. This pseudo-decentralisation is nothing other than the restoration of "market mechanisms" thereby implying the renunciation of socialist planning. The content of this planning is partly obscured by the extreme centralisation, which derives from a hypertrophy of the state apparatus. It ultimately acts as an obstacle to a social domination of production and contributes to the reinforcement of the role of monetary and commodity relations.<sup>16</sup>

Marx and Engels defined socialism as excluding commodity and market relations. In Anti-Duhring Engels writes:

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15: Charles Bettelheim, Economic Calculation and Forms of Property. Trans. by John Taylor (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976). p. XI of the preface.

16.. Ibid., p. XII of the Preface.

"Direct social production will exclude commodity exchange, therefore, also the transformation of products into commodities and its values". The quantity of social labor would also be measured directly, in hours. Production plans will be made in the knowledge of the utility of various products compared with one another and with the quantity of labor necessary for their production. People will be able to manage everything very simply without the intervention of much vaunted 'values'.<sup>17</sup> The categories of value and price do not have to intervene in the calculations necessary for socialist planning.

None of this is the case in "Socialist countries" today. In fact, Eastern Europe has an uneasy combination of monetary measures and socially and politically determined priorities. Economic calculations are not directly made in any of the existing socialist formations. They always seem to be carried out, at least to a large extent, through commodity categories, even though economic plans do take into account elements other than

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17. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

those that enter into monetary calculations in the evaluation of costs expressed in money.<sup>18</sup>

Monetary calculations, therefore take precedence over economic calculations. The relative lack of economic calculations or their slow progress is accounted for in terms of objective and subjective factors.

(i) OBJECTIVE FACTORS: These are of two types: (a) the low level of development of productive forces resulting in continued existence of commodity forms in the economy; and (b) the existing relations of production in these societies contribute in turn, to the strengthening of commodity relations.

(ii) SUBJECTIVE FACTORS: Or ideological reasons too can be presented under at least two essential aspect: (a) since Marxist economists have been pre-occupied with exchange value, no account is taken of the category of use value in the planning calculations of transitional social formations; and (b) the difficulties

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18. Ibid., p. 32

arising out of a systematic and scientifically indispensable critique of marginal utility theories by Marxist Economists.<sup>19</sup>

If, value and commodity categories persist in the transition period, there must be a set of social relations which require such categories. These exist when relations between producers are "duplicated" by relations between proprietors and when the producers and proprietors are relatively independent and enter into purchase - sale relations with one another. These relations are a form of dissimulation i. e. the relations between men take a "phantasmagoric form of relations between things." Bettelheim remarks that socialist planned relations can also "Dissimulate" because of the great complexity of inter-relations within a plan which can give rise to "plan fetishism."

The historical explanation given by Preobrazhensky and later by Stalin, that value categories survive because of the survival of non-socialist sectors, is rejected by Bettelheim. He finds Stalin's explanation

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19. Ibid., pp. 38-43

in terms of two forms of property inadequate since it does not specify the reasons for the maintenance of commodity categories and, therefore, of buying and selling within the state sector.

To understand Bettelheim's characterisation of the relations of production it would be useful to recall the distinction between relations of property and relations of possession in a capitalist mode of production.

Generally, possession is established by the ability to put the means of production into operation.

Depending on the structure of the labor process this capacity can be jointly held in a partial holding or can not be. With regard to property (as an economic relation) - it is constituted by the "power to appropriate" the objects on which it acts for uses that are given. Particularly the "means of production" and the power to dispose of the products obtained with the help of these means of production. This power can assert itself as a power of co-ordination or direction of labor

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processes and as a power of appropriation of products obtained from a given utilization. The power that property establishes can only be effective if it is articulated on the basis of possession, either the agents of property also being the agents of possession or the agents of possession being subordinated to the agents of property. Property and possession are exercised through a series of "functions" - coordination, direction and control of labor processes; appropriation of the means of production for given uses; appropriation of products. These functions can be carried out by the property owners themselves (the "bearers of property relation") or by their representatives (their agents).<sup>20</sup>

In the majority of Socialist countries, possession of the means of production reverts to the enterprises. When this possession is consolidated by corresponding legal relations, the enterprise is established as a legal subject: it disposes off fixed and circulating capital, it buys and sells products, borrows from the banking system, disposes off liquid capital etc. consequently this possession tends to assume the legal aspects of property.

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20. Ibid., p. 69

However, as long as the state effectively exercises a proprietary power over the enterprises the actions they perform are legal. To the extent that they are in sole possession of the means of production, products and liquid capital that they have at their disposal, the legal actions they execute are legal through the authority of state ownership. For example, when a product is sold, the sum received by the enterprise in return for this sale enters into the possession of the enterprise and becomes state property.

Consequently, it is the managers of the enterprises who within the limits imposed by the state property as a relation of production have the effective power to dispose off the means of production and products obtained through the operation of these means by the workers. Concretely, the plurality of these capacities of disposition, each rooted in a determinate enterprise, is one of the objective basis for commodity exchange between units of production.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the existence of the enterprise appears negatively as a limitation on the state's power - and beyond this of the workers' power

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21. Ibid., p.83



of disposition and appropriation, and positively as an effect of specific relations of production, that is, Capitalist relations of production.

Bettleheim finds the term enterprise inapplicable to Socialism preferring "production unit". For him "enterprise autonomy" is a transitional category and it does not find its place in the post-transition period when the "enterprises" or production units lose their individual identities and get merged with the socialist production process. An "enterprise" operates with money, pays wages, administers sub-units, possesses a profit and loss account. It is thus capitalist in its very nature, even if it is "self managed" in the Yugoslav manner. For, "in the absence of socialist planning", the enterprise, whether or not "self managed", is dominated by capitalist relations of production and must work for the return on its capital. Even when the enterprises are subject to control and intervention from the planners, they remain an institution within which capitalist relations produce themselves. This capitalist character of the enterprise is because its structure

assumes the form of a double separation : the separation of the workers from their means of production (which has, its counterpart, the possession of these means by the enterprises, i. e. in fact, by the managers) and the separation of the enterprises from each other.

The character of the double separation that is assumed by the structure of the the enterprise is concerned with the totality of the relations peculiar to this apparatus. In the first place - and this is the fundamental point - the character of the double separation is an effect of the relations of production themselves and therefore, an effect of the conditions in which the combination of labor power and the means of production takes place. Within the enterprise this combination is carried out under the direction of their managers after the labor power necessary has been purchased. Thus, labor power and means of production intervene in the process of production under the value form and the labor process is one in which value form is reproduced through abstract labor.<sup>22</sup>

At the economic level, period of transition toward Socialism is the period during which socialist

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22. Ibid., p.86.

relations of production, transform the character of the productive forces. There is a particular mode of thought that mechanically relates the development of the productive forces to the transformation of the relations and 'thinks' the first term in a linear fashion, imagining that it is this development that produces a transformation in the relations of production. Such a conception, contends Bettelheim turns its back on the real movement of history and can even have a negative effect on the development of transitional social formations.<sup>23</sup>

The contradiction that results from it can be eliminated in two ways: either by making the plan an instrument for the duplication of commodity relations, or by transforming the social relations, and thus, also the character of the productive forces that assure the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. In the first case, the plan is only the ideological double of the market. In the second case, it is an instrument for the transformation of social relations, and for a social domination over the conditions of reproduction. As long

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23. Ibid., p.87

as the first framework continues to exist, we are dealing with state capitalism dominated by a state bourgeoisie. This situation does not prevent an indicative plan from being elaborated, but it does make it impossible to put real planning into operation.

Bettleheim thus builds on the idea of state capitalism, a system of state owned enterprises associated with the era of imperialism. He seems it as an unstable transitional phase, which could slide into capitalism, through the growth of market relations. Surplus value under state capitalism can be used for socialist purposes by a workers' state, but it can be misappropriated by a "ruling class" consisting of an alliance of managers and their (state) controllers. The real significance of state property depends on the real relations existing between the mass of workers and the state apparatus. If this apparatus is really and concretely dominated by workers (instead of being situated above them and dominating them), then state property is the legal form of the workers' social property; on the other hand, if it is dominated by a body of functionaries and administrators, and if it

escapes the control and direction of the working masses, then this body of functionaries and administrators effectively becomes the proprietor (in the sense of the relations of production) of the means of production. This body then forms a "social class" (a state bourgeoisie) because of the relation existing between itself and the means of production on the one hand, the workers on the other. This situation clearly does not imply that this class personally consumes the totality of the surplus product but that it disposes off this product according to the norms that are class norms, that include an obligation to allow the market and the criteria of profitability to play a dominant role. The term state bourgeoisie is also justified by the function that this class fulfils, the principal one being the function of accumulation that it carries out as an agent of "social capital".<sup>24</sup>

How can "the effective domination of the producers" over the means of production and the product be established ? The dominance of socialist relations over

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24. Ibid., p. 99

commodity relations ? This can only really take place if the separation of the workers from the means of production has at least partially been brought to an end. This presupposes that the workers occupy a dominant economic and political position, at least through the intermediary of a vanguard ensuring the direction of the state apparatus and control over the units of production. In this case, the plan ensures the unity of social labor. Yet the existence of commodity relations, as much at the level of enterprises as in the relation between enterprises and state agencies, signifies that this unity is not that of socialised labor. State property and bourgeois rights form the framework for a "state capitalism" dominated by the working class. Capitalist social relations of production exist but they are placed in the subordinate position and combined with planned economic relations that dominate them. This specific combination which is peculiar to the transition is generally designated as corresponding to the existence of a socialist - economic base.<sup>25</sup>

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25. Ibid., p. 103.

In transitional social formations, argues Bettelheim the Productive forces always play a determinant role in the last instance, while the relations of production play a dominant role... It is the character of the dominant relations of production that distinguishes the transitional direction in which a determinate social formation is involved.<sup>26</sup> Two structural laws develop and combine in a transitional social formation. One is the law of value, and the other is the law of social direction of the economy. (The latter is the fundamental law of developed socialism under which one has a direct economic and social calculation, which does not produce by the detour of the "law of value").

Moreover in the transition to Socialism, politics must be in command of economics, so that the distribution of social labor is not dominated by requirements of the reproduction of capitalist relations of production but the requirements of the construction of Socialism.. In an ideal socialist economy, the link between the "productive units" should be built up through work. The commodity relations divide the

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26. Ibid., p.130.

workers and leave them only in an illusion of independence and autonomy. "They cannot really dominate the use of either their means of production or of their products, since this is itself dominated by commodity relations."

In distinction to Brus and Bettelheim, Kornai has been able to show an alternative approach to the problems connected with the over-centralisation of the economy with extensive use of the systems theory.<sup>27</sup> He builds up his model by dividing different processes of the economy into real and control spheres.<sup>28</sup> The material and physical processes like production, transportation, consumption etc. fall into the category of real sphere. The control sphere takes into account the control processes like observation, information flow, decision making etc. This sphere embodies all the mechanisms which control the whole economy. Such control mechanisms can be distinguished by the types of organisation in the economy, the information structure, the behavioural rules

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27. Janos Kornai, Anti Equilibrium (Amsterdam : North Holland Publishing Company, 1971)

28. Ibid., pp. 39-45.



and the motivation to work.<sup>29</sup> Different control mechanisms work in all economic systems simultaneously (the scope of their operation and their relative strengths may vary depending upon the system) - either in parallel or with sufficient degree of overlap. In a decentralised structure, the price mechanism is predominant and acts as a signalling system for control. In a fully centralised system, the directive mechanism prevails. Price and directive mechanisms are comparable to the central nervous system of the human anatomy.<sup>30</sup> Each of these mechanisms has some control over the different functions of the economy but they respond at a "high level". They may be totally irresponsive to the minor changes and may lead to distortions in the normal functioning of the economic system. Other mechanisms which respond to minor and local changes, must, therefore be taken care of. Like autonomous nervous system, there are, thus, autonomous control mechanisms which can be used side by side with the central control methods. Autonomous control itself is a "complex regulator" and consists of several other

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29. Ibid., p. 36

30. Janos Kornai and Bela Martos, "Autonomous Control of the Economic System" in *Econometrica*, Vol. 41, 1973, p. 509.



sub-mechanisms. Kornai traces the following sub-mechanisms:

(a) Control Based on Stock Signals:

By observing the stock position, the enterprise can make necessary adjustments. By reducing production if there exists overstock or by increasing production in a situation of shortage and thereby, reach the level of "equilibrium". Each firm can do it independently and no central directive is necessary for the same.

(b) Direct Connection Between the Seller and the Buyer:

This can be brought about by an efficient and direct information system. "Offers, advertisements, preliminary discussions and orders" can be used to accomplish this.<sup>31</sup>

The autonomous control is, therefore, a "low level mechanism". It is not only local in character, but also governed by the direct producer and consumer. This assumes a high level of team work and cooperation among different agents of the economy. Kornai observes that identification of different economic agents with a

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31. Ibid., p.527.

particular enterprise develops an interest for the welfare of the enterprise or organisation among them. This motivates the economic agents or workers to cooperate with each other and make available the necessary informations for each other. This will not only lower the administrative and information cost, but also make production more efficient.

Korani puts forth a model of economic management where enterprises play a very important role, in terms of being allowed to take all current production decisions and increased use of price mechanism in a centrally planned socialist economy. This, however, does not rule out the necessity of directive mechanism. The central authority can intervene to correct any distortion created by the price mechanisms (which plays a secondary role in the centrally planned economic system) or by the independent functioning of the enterprises. The system provides for waste - resulting from minor fluctuations in the economic activities - but can be made up by reducing cost in administration and information gathering.<sup>32</sup>

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32. Ibid., p. 528.

## A CRITICAL EVALUATION

What Marx's dialectics does for everything, and his conception of human nature for the ties between man and nature, the theory of alienation does for the capitalist version of these ties. The three constitute a pyramid of concerns. Emphasizing the place of alienation in Capitalism does not mean that other forms of society where some relations of alienation exist can not be described in similar terms. Marx did speak of alienation in Feudalism. The foregoing analysis attempts at applying the category of alienation to existing socialist countries.

The crisis, which makes necessary a re-examination of the entire course of events since 1917 is naturally a process which proceeds at different rates in different countries involved, and does not always reach the same intensity in all spheres of social life. There are moreover advances and retreats and there will also be periods of relative stabilisation. But it has gripped all countries of the Soviet bloc, affecting all areas of life. The abolition of private property in the means of pro-

duction has in no way meant their immediate transformation into the property of the people. Rather, the whole society stands propertyless against its state machine. The obsolete political organisation of the new society, which cuts deep into the economic process itself, blunts the social driving forces. Where the aim was the reabsorption of the state by society, these societies are faced with a desperate attempt to adopt the whole of living society into the crystalline structure of the state. Stratification instead of socialisation, in other words socialisation in a totally alienated form.

If one does accept that Socialist Societies are the type described in preceding pages, what should such a society be called? Bahro, for instance, characterises them as being 'Proto-socialist', whereas Sweezy calls them 'Post-capitalist'. Attempts have also been made to describe the bureaucracy and the managerial group in these societies as constituting a 'class'.

In the west, David Lane has argued for a concept of a 'Uni-class state', Socialist because of

state ownership of means of production, but 'bourgeois' because distribution is unequal. In this conception everyone is a species of worker (hence, 'Uni-class'), indeed it is a workers' state, but there is inequality and privilege. This conception, however, is misleading for it obscures the distinction between 'we' and 'they', between the rulers and the ruled.

Another conception is that of a 'degenerated workers' state' which Trotsky favoured. If, by this is meant that there was once a workers' state and that it degenerated, it is an arguable position. Yet some theorists like E. H. Carr are more sceptical about a workers' state ever existing. However Trotskyists can and do argue that something which could be called a workers' state existed, say in 1920. Trotsky could claim that it had degenerated by the time of his own defeat. Yet can the present Soviet State be described as a Workers' State, albeit a degenerate one ?

A number of analysts assert the existence of a new class or a new bourgeoisie. The essence of the case rests on the proposition that what matters is control,

and that the upper strata are in control; they decide what should be done with nationalised means of production. This is the basis of Bettelheim's claim that there is a 'State bourgeoisie' which runs the Soviet Union. Bettelheim, is ofcourse, aware that there is both State ownership and planning, but for him these are necessary but not sufficient preconditions for a Socialist transformation; essential for progress towards Socialism is the domination of the workers. Instead there is domination over the workers, the means of production and the product by a class. Presumably this interpretation lends itself well to the notion that the ruling stratum that controls the State is, collectively, the equivalent of a Capitalist class.

What is of significance, however, is the 'control' exercised through a heirarchy and the relation it has to the traditional Marxian analysis of class. Control relates to power and power resides in ownership ; Marxists have generally underscored property relations as a key to identifying a ruling class. This is

a useful model for analysing Capitalist social formations. But what of other social formations ?

There are situations in which power ('domination - subordination' ) determines relations of production rather than vice-versa. W. Brus makes this point in his works. He argues that the traditionally accepted relationship between economy and polity as 'base' on the one hand and 'superstructure' on the other, and hence as 'in the last resort' the determining factor and the determined factor needs with respect to Socialism, fundamental modifications. Economics and politics are so intimately intertwined, especially when considered dynamically, that the continued use of old conceptual apparatus of 'base' and 'superstructure' becomes more and more inadequate. He emphasizes the dependence of further development of Socialist relations of production and hence the evolution of economic base on changes in the political power system. Hence, the emphasis on 'democratism' in his works.

Does the solution lie simply in an immediate demolition of the state machine ? In his analysis of



the nature and role of the state Bahro claims that it is a formidable motor force of civilisation, indispensable to regulate society and to neutralise competition among particular appetites and interest. Industrial Society can no longer afford the luxury of dismantling the state apparatus, without endangering economic reproduction as a whole. He goes on to say that the division of labor must be overcome before the state can begin to wither away. Who, then, will organize and ensure this elimination of the division of labor ? The bureaucracy itself ? Does not Bahro himself demonstrate that the bureaucracy has no interest in doing so; just the contrary ? How can the bureaucracy's monopoly of management be overturned without beginning to dismantle the state, without increasingly transferring its competence to different congresses of workers' councils ?

The state is not merely an ensemble of technical or even technocratic functions. Bahro himself points this out on many occasions. He derides the so called leading role of party, which is merely a

clumsy rationalisation for the bureaucracy's monopoly of power. "The party has died of its bureaucratism and hyper bureaucratism..... The individual members of the party are not communists. When they are spoken to as communists the apparatus appeals almost exclusively to their quasi-military discipline." But it is these bureaucrats who direct and make up the State.

The problem of bureaucracy in a workers' state is indeed so new and complex that it allows little or no certitude. Yet it does raise significant issues when seen in the context of Weber's characterisation of the same. The rationality principle is then replaced by that of repetitiveness and abidance to rigid rules and regulations which in most cases leads to irrationality. Since the writings of Preobrazhensky, we have been aware that the USSR in the absence of a victorious socialist revolution in the West, was condemned to "Primitive socialist accumulation". It, however, does not follow from this that the only instrument available for affecting this process was the bureaucracy or that this accumulation necessarily had to occur at the cost of an

absolute decline in the living standards of the workers and the majority of peasants. A materialist explanation of the Stalinist dictatorship should be based on precise socio-economic features and not on the logic of primitive socialist accumulation per se. The inevitability of a bureaucratic dictatorship can not be deduced only from the particular historic conditions prevailing in Russia in 1917. A multitude of intermediary links always exists between ultimate objective causes and final practical results. Thus, for instance, the betrayal of the German revolution in 1918, 1919, 1920 and 1923 by the social democratic leadership, certainly had as important an effect on the fate of the Russian revolution as did Russia's Asiatic and "barbarous" past, for it ensured the isolation of the October revolution, contrary to the projects and expectations of the Bolsheviks.

Bahro manifests considerable scepticism towards the revolutionary potential of the working class. Granted, when he stresses the extreme automatisation of the working class in East Europe, he emphasises a phenomenon which has been noted before. Here we may pause

and go back to Trotsky's formulation of a "Political revolution". Over a quarter of a century after its formulation, this programme has remained relevant; and most of its ideas have reappeared in the post-Stalinist movement of reform. Yet the question must be asked whether in insisting on the necessity of a political revolution in the U. S. S. R., Trotsky had not taken too dogmatic a view of such a prospect. From the tenor of "The Revolution Betrayed" it is clear that he saw no chance of any reform from above; and there was indeed no chance of it in his lifetime and for the rest of the Stalin Era. But during that time there was no chance in the Soviet Union of any political revolution either. This was a period of deadlock; it was impossible either to cut or to untie the gordian knots of Stalinism. Any programme of change, whether revolutionary or reformist, was illusory. This, however, did not prevent Trotsky from searching for a way out. But he was searching within a vicious circle, which only world shaking events began to breach many years later. And when that happened the Soviet Union moved away from Stalinism through reform. "from above" in the first

instance. What forced the reform was precisely the factors on which Trotsky had banked; economic progress, the cultural rise of the masses, and the end of Soviet isolation. The break with Stalinism could only be piecemeal, because at the end of the Stalin era there existed and could exist no political force capable of and willing to act in a revolutionary manner. Moreover, throughout the first decade after Stalin, there did not emerge "from below" any autonomous and articulate mass movement even for reform.

Coming back to Bahro, he is not entirely wrong even when he adds that under existing conditions of bureaucratic dictatorship, it is virtually impossible for the working class to reconstitute its organised cadres by itself. But the only conclusion to be drawn from this is that a detonator external to the working class is probably necessary to set the process of political revolution in motion (e.g. a major stimulus from abroad, a division in the apparatus, a revolt by intellectuals etc.).

But to conclude that because the working class encounters great difficulties in triggering a process of

political revolution in Eastern Europe today, it will not be able to play the role of protagonist during the process and especially at its culmination, is to fail to assimilate the real lessons of the Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring and the Polish events.

Moreover, Bahro extends his scepticism to the working class in the West and proceeds to a general revision of the Marxist theory of the key role of the proletariat in the Socialist revolution. He writes "All Marxist discussions since 1914 lead to the conclusion that the interests on which the workers actually act are not their real interests. These interests on which the workers actually act do not go beyond the limits of a 'petty bourgeois' and 'corporatist betterment of their lot'. Thus an "inherently reformist" (Trade Unionist) working class cannot be the bearer of a genuine socialist programme. Such a programme can be developed only by a "historical bloc" within which intellectuals, technicians and highly skilled white collar employees will play a much more dynamic role than workers.

A bridge to Euro-communism is thus laid. Euro-communist strategy is founded precisely on a rejection of the revolutionary potential of the working class. Moreover, it is simply not true that since 1914, the entire behaviour of the European working class has been confined to a search for immediate material advantages of a trade unionist or corporatist type. Some instances may be cited here : the general strike against the Kapp Putsch in 1920; the strikes and factory occupations in Italy in 1920; the general strikes of 1926 in Britain and of 1936 in France; the Spanish revolution of 1936-37; the Italian general strike in July 1946, May 1968 in France and "Creeping May" in Italy in 1969 and the Portugese revolution of 1974-75.

Although the revolutionary potential of the working class cannot be denied altogether, its relative weakness in existing socialist societies may be explained thus:

- (i) due to the absence of or non-identification of two antagonistic classes in a Socialist

Society, the working class is unable to  
situate its 'enemy' categorically; and

- (ii) Economic crisis being relatively less frequent, coupled with almost complete employment, the working class is in a more comfortable position in a socialist society.

Bahro's work ties together three strands of critical thought and action of present times. First there is the practical experience of anti-bureaucratic movements. The Prague Spring and revolts of Polish workers in the Baltic ports are felt in his analysis. Next, there are the progress and contradictions of international Marxist thought of the recent past. His work resounds with reverberations of the polemic between the Stalinist and Yugoslav communists, the Sino-Soviet debates, the flowering of western revolutionary Marxist thought, particularly since May 1968, the international debate among Marxists on the nature of U. S. S. R. and the debates around Euro-communism. Finally, he is also product of the German theoretical tradition.



Turning to the 'Economic' critiques, most of the theoretical works seem to have a set of pre-conceived priorities. The difference in priorities have often led to differences in opinions too. For Brus, the priority is political democracy, for Bettelheim it is construction of socialist values and for Kornai economic efficiency. Both Brus and Bettelheim are at logger heads while treating the question of enterprise autonomy and decentralisation. However, Bettelheim's identification of the market categories of a capitalist economy with the counter part in a socialist economy constitutes a serious error in his analysis. He fails to understand that certain categories, characteristic of Capitalism, change their socio-economic content, as the system passes from Capitalism towards Communism. With the state ownership of means of production during the progress to communism the market categories and also enterprises play a totally different role. The "enterprise" itself is a historical category. At different periods of time, under different social environment, it has taken different content. So the existence of the enterprise, per se, does not imply existence of elements of capitalism.

There is nothing at all 'moralistic', 'normative' or 'idealist' about contrasting a definition derived from a scientific analysis of social structures with a reality to which it does not conform. Thought veers from Science into moralising idealism not when it notes the difference between the realities of Eastern Europe and the definitions of Marx - which is an obvious one - but when it contents itself with condemning it without explaining its origins or seeking the means by which it can be overcome in reality.

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