

Western Marxism and "Oriental" Societies: A Critical Evaluation

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled Western Marxism and "Oriental" Societies: A Critical Evaluation submitted by Gaurang Ranjan Sahay in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

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INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING ORIENTALISM

"OBJECTIVE" RESEARCH AND ORIENTALISM

For many centuries, people belonging to the Western civilization have been writing and making "authoritative" judgements about people belonging to non-Western and Oriental societies. They claim the use of the scientific method in making these statements and further contend that the method is value-free and peculiar to Western traditions. For example, Weber opined, "the rules of logic and method are our "general orientation" in the world. They are the "least problematic" aspect of science, an aspect which must be accepted even by non-western cultures" (quoted from Hekman, 1983 : 179).

In recent years the arguments against this absolutist position has gained wide acceptance. Sometimes major methodological problems which go to the extent of throwing doubt as to whether one can really understand people who belong to alien groups or foreign cultures. These methodological issues are related with relativism and value neutrality. It is maintained that meaning of a particular action is dependent on the social structure to which the actor belongs. Each society produces a particular logical system. The activity of a social scientist must be

limited to analysis of his own society and its people because the logic of social action depends on the institutional structures internal to the society. So, the logic and method can not be regarded in any sense superior to logic inherent in various structures (Winch, 1958).

Following the ideas of Winch, Bloor (1978), for example, cites Evans-Pritchard's study of Azanda society as an example. Bloor opines that calling Azanda society irrational necessarily involves imposing a standard of rationality irrespective of the cultural context and endowing it with universality. This, he argues, is illegitimate and unjustifiable. Winch and Bloor thus seem to argue that no judgements can be made about the relative merits of one society over another. Every aspect of human life is entirely relative.

Many social scientists have also pondered on the question of objectivity in social science. Objectivity is defined as freedom from subjective biases and social constraints. It consists in the effort to carry out one's analysis in the most impartial manner, detached from everything, and in not allowing one's own presupposition or preferences to influence one's studies. Many

scholars have raised doubts about the possibility of such objectivity for various reasons. They argue that people cannot develop knowledge independently of a society in which they are socialized. Arguments about the meaning of alien action do not take place outside society, they are part of the social process itself. In no case, ^{should} knowledge be treated as if it existed outside the social context. Even judgements of truth and falsity based on a specific knowledge require intersubjective appraisal. Any written work, moreover is also explicitly located in the personal experience of its author. According to Gouldner, "Every social theory has both political and personal experience, which, according to the technical canons of social theory, it is not supposed to have" (Gouldner, 1971; 41). Similarly, Therborn remarks, "The very different style of progressive theorists in American 1960s is significantly marked by the populist and expressive culture that became widespread among students and middle strata in that decade" (Therborn, 1976 : 21). Arguing against the distinction between pure and political knowledge, Said writes :

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society.

These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though naturally enough his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of truth, everyday reality (Said, 1985 : 10).

It seems therefore, that there are serious problems involved in study of other cultures. Knowledge is culturally specific and scholars cannot be completely objective or totally free from certain value positions. At the same time, it would perhaps be going too far to say that certain principles of scientific method cannot be universalised. If that were to be the case then there would be no protection against letting ones prejudice rule under the guise of "social relativism". Indeed, the very act of communicating with scholars elsewhere demands a certain agreement on the rules of research which validate certain facts, and arguments about them, as "scientific" (Foucault, 1972 : Chapter II).

In the following pages of this dissertation we will concern ourselves specifically with one such "Scientific" body of knowledge, viz., Marxism. Marxist theories are said to have universal validity, but in the explication of abstract statements and in the development of consequent action programmes there is a definite tilt towards "orientalism". Here too we

find quite unexpectedly, a separation of the Occident from the Orient. In the scheme of things the Orient is outside universal history and must be dragged into it and subjected to the tutelage of the advancing Western World. Once again we find a resistance towards appreciating the contextual rationality of the "Orient" and the internal tempo of Oriental societies. Universal history is the universalization of Western history. This has many consequences as we shall see later. For the moment let us ponder a while on the question of orientalism.

MEANING AND VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF ORIENTALISM

Orientalism is a system of knowledge about the Oriental societies based on a dichotomous model of 'the Occident' and 'the Orient' (Said, 1985 : 2). The object of orientalism is always the Orient. Systematic formulation of statements for dealing with the Orient started in the early fourteenth century with the establishment by the Church Council of Vienna of a number of university chairs to promote an understanding of Oriental languages and cultures.

Usually, orientalists use positivist or idealist methodology in their studies. When they use positivist methodology, first of all, they describe the normal

type after making observation of a large number of cases. The normal type is arrived at after constructing a type which possesses "average" features. The understanding of society is thus based on a statistical average of observed regularities. Then, they proceed to differentiate and classify societies into various categories such as, dynamic and static, rational^{al} and irrational, etc.

In idealism, objective institutions are the manifestation of subjective ideas. Therefore, when orientalists employ idealist methodology, it is on the basis of subjective ideas and intuition, say, for instance, the ideas of freedom, on which mankind is differentiated and classified. For example, orientalists assert that Occidentals cherish independence and freedom and it is this mental trait that distinguish them from Orientals. Thus, positivism and idealism inspite of two different methodologies and their diverse origins often converge and result in similar conclusions. Positivist method proceeds from classifying society to classifying individuals, while idealist method is proceeded by classifying the attitudes of men and then move to the classification of society.

Apart from these characteristics which the orientalists share, orientalist scholarship specifically demonstrates two additional features. With the help of Turner we may list them as the following : (i) An overwhelming staticness characterizes Oriental societies such that they only "decline" historically; (ii) Society is an "expressive totality" in the sense that all institutions of a society express a primary essence or disposition (Turner, 1978 : 81). These assumptions determined the various types of questions that are asked about the Orient and consequently the set of answers following from the boundaries established by orientalism. Then, to employ Althusserian terminology, orientalism is a "Problematic" which determine the object of study, various questions that are posed of the object, methods of study and a set of answers or conclusions within a given set of disciplines.

There are three major assumptions which often figure in the works of orientalists. These assumptions are assumptions of essentialism, historicism and functionalism. The essentialist assumption is present in such statements that contrast Occidental societies to Oriental ones on the basis of the respective inner

essences. Western societies are characterized by classes, democratic and individualist ideology, rational religion, revolutions, autonomous cities and formal and secular laws and private property. All these factors unfold in the dynamic progress of these societies towards industrial capitalism and historical development. The Orient, on the other hand, whose inner essence characterized by none of these structures but by authoritarianism, substantive laws and irrational religion, is static, inert and slave to tradition. Hegel was of the view that Islam, no matter what the circumstances of its origin, was now quite characteristically in "Oriental ease and repose" (Hegel, 1956 : 360). One also notices a linkage in orientalist studies between delinquents, insane people, women and the other similar people of society and the oriental people, sometimes with regret, because all of them are characterized by the same similar traits. For example, both orientals and women express unlimited sensuality and stupidity (Said, 1985: 207). Thus, orientalists consider people of the Orient as a set of problems to be solved. Orientalism proposes to provide a series of remedies, one of them is Western rule, or domination, or influence, whereby the static Orient can be shaken out of timeless stupor.

The assumptions of orientalists are historicist because they analyse the history of Western society in terms of stages of development such as primitive, equalitarian, slavery, feudalism and capitalism but see Oriental societies in terms of genesis and fall. von Guennebaum (1970) believes that 'classical Islam' is an ideal model constituted by the Islamic search for 'the correct life', the history of Islam must be a history of decline from the time of the Prophet. Similarly, Waines observes, "the birth of Islam is also the genesis of its decline" (quoted from Turner, 1978 :6). In this historicist approach, the dynamic history of Western society, characterized by constant progressive revolutions, is contrasted with the static and timeless history of the Orient in which uprising and movements are merely a symptom of its despotic character and decay.

The assumptions of orientalists can also be functionalist when it emphasises the integrative role of various structures of the Oriental social formation that makes it remain in the same position. Asad opines, "My suggestion here is that ultimately the functional anthropologist and the orientalist were concerned with the same theoretical question : what holds society together? How is order achieved

or destroyed" (Asad, 1973a: 271). It is not, therefore, very surprising if one notices great agreements among scholars of vastly different theoretical positions when it comes to characterizing oriental societies.

INSTITUTIONAL PRE-CONDITIONS FOR ORIENTALISM

Orientalism cannot develop itself. For its self development it relies, to a great extent, on institutional developments and innovations. As Foucault argued : "objects of knowledge emerge under the positive conditions of a complex bundle of relations. These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, forms of behaviour, system of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization" (Foucault, 1972 : 45) Regarding the emergence of science of psychiatry, Foucault wrote that it is only with the emergence of an institution like asylum 'a system of social protection could be' interiorized in the forms of consciousness' and a recognition of the specificity of madness could be made manifest on 'the surface of institutions', that the new science of psychiatry became possible (Foucault, 1973 : 48). Further, Foucault in one of his latest works believed that there exists an interdependence between institutions and knowledge yet he gives a certain priority to

institution. This priority is asserted by his central image of panopticon, where an architectural mechanism which renders human beings available to continuous observation forms the precondition for the elaboration of knowledge (Foucault, 1977: 27).

Right from the beginning systematic production of orientalist writings is very dependent on various academic institutions. In the late eighteenth century, the self metamorphosis of orientalism from a scholarly discipline to an imperial institution became possible with the emergence and development of capitalist institutions. An unstoppable European expansion in search of markets, resources and colonies determined the Oriental-Occidental relationship. This particular closeness between the West and the Orient has been very productive for orientalism even if it always shows the comparatively greater strength of the West. A number of orientalist institutions were set-up in the West and for the West. In Britain, the Asiatic Society was established in 1784 and the Royal Asiatic Society in 1823; in France, Napoleon's Institute d'Egypte and the Societe Asiatique were founded in 1821. Similarly, in Germany too Oriental Societies emerged from 1845 onwards. These were important institutional developments. These institutions helped in the development and

institutionalization of orientalism. Every orientalist found a support system of power culminating in institutions of state. Orientalists began to write about the Orient with an unquestioning authority of a state. The institutional forms of Western state characterized by expansion, historical confrontation, association with religions and cultures not one's own, and classification of mankind into various categories, provided a conducive base for the development of orientalism. Without them orientalism as an imperial institution could not have occurred.

DOMINATION AND HEGEMONY IN ORIENTALISM

Orientalism has a very positive functional relationship with the dominant or hegemonic Western culture. In a social formation, culture of a particular group predominate over culture of other group. Gramsci wrote that the supremacy of a social group manifests itself into different ways : 'domination' or coercion and 'intellectual and moral leadership' or consent. The latter type of supremacy that he called 'hegemony' is made possible through dominant culture (Gramsci, 1971 : 57). Partha Chatterjee rightly opines that the post Enlightenment culture in Europe produced an entire body of knowledge in which the orient appeared as a "system of representa-

tion framed by a whole series of forces that brought the Orient into western learning, western consciousness and, later, western empire" (Chatterjee, 1986 :36).

The major component in Western dominant culture is the idea of western identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-Western people and cultures. As John Dunn writes, "The extent and limits of the claim to be genuinely better at knowing are not merely central issues in the academic tradition of Western philosophy; they are also central issues in the political and cultural life of the modern world" (quoted from Anisuzzamann and Abdel-Malek, 1983 : 23). The claim by the Occidental societies to know better has several implications for the non-Western world. One of these is the silent acceptance by the Orientals of the Occidental vision of the Orient. This is precisely what made Western culture hegemonic in the Orient. It is the result of hegemony that gives orientalism durability and strength. Orientalism is very much dependent for its framework on this positional superiority which puts the Occidental in a dominant position in a whole series of possible relationship with the Orient. It is the Western dominant culture that made orientalists think about the Orient in a certain framework with very little resistance on the

orient's part. Orientalism under Western hegemony over the Orient made possible the emergence of an Orient suitable for study and administration. The common element in orientalism is a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient. There is nothing mysterious or natural about this authority. Said writes :

Occidental interest in the Orient was political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it...but that it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically alongwith brute political, economic and militarily rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that is obviously was in the field I call orientalism (Said, 1985 : 12).

LANGUAGE OF ORIENTALISM

The image of the Orient, as it is in orientalism, is, to an extent, a creation of the prose that orientalists use in their descriptions. The important things to look at are style, figures of speech, metaphors, setting, narrative devices, rhetoric idioms and other means ^{of} representation ~~not~~ the correctness of representations. Figures of speech associated with the Orient are all declarative and self-evident. The objective and tense that orientalists employ is always trans-historical and timeless. The narrative devices that they use are always helpful in comparison

with the Occident. When an orientalist makes a statement, "India is despotic", they need not give the evidence, the evidence is contained in the trans-historical 'is' of someone else. India becomes more despotic when the statement is repeated and the author of the statement gains more authority over India. In orientalism, the Orient is less a place than a set of references, statements, imageries and quotation that seems to have its origin in some texts based on a system of prejudices.

Various claims of orientalism are always conditioned by the fact that its truth are always contained in its language. Nietzsche wrote that truths of a particular language contained in "a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transformed and embellished poetically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people; truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are (Nietzsche, 1954 : 46-47). Foucault also said, "Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulations, distributions, circulation and operations of statements (Foucault, 1980:33). Foucault's ordered procedures' are certainly Nietzsche's

'mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms'. These views draw attention to the fact that a wide field of meanings, connotations and definitions of the Orient provided by orientalism do not necessarily refer to the geographical and historical Orient but to the Orient created and sustained by Western dominant culture and orientalism.

ORIENTALISM AND RACISM

There has been a very close relationship between orientalism and ideas about the biological and racial differences and inequality. Orientalists, generally, though not always, carry forward the binary typology of advanced and backward races, cultures and societies. Racist ideology involves a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It means speaking in certain ways, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. Before the power of this ideology both non-whites and whites are supposed to bend. Racist ideology is based on such assumption that although whites are in a numerical minority, they are superior human beings. So, they are entitled to own and to expand the majority of the world resources which includes the control of non-whites who are in numerical majority. This is an important instance of

what Abdel-Malek calls "The hegemonism of possessing minorities" and "anthropocentrism accompanied by Europocentrism" (Abdel-Malek, 1981 : 77).

The circumstances out of racist ideology ~~emerged has~~ at least two common features with the circumstances from which orientalism emerged in the late eighteenth century. One of them is the culturally sanctioned practice of using broad generalizations by which reality is divided into various categories such as languages, races, colours, mentalities, cultures, personalities and so on. Underlying these categories is the rigid binary opposition of "our" and "their", with the former always encroaching upon the later. This opposition was developed and reinforced not only by various academic disciplines but also by Darwinian theses on survival and natural selection and, of course, by the rhetoric of cultural humanism: "Our values are liberal, humane and correct".

The other circumstances common to both racism and orientalism is the subject-matter commanded by each as well as the sense that such subject-matter is characterized by certain traits. Only a white man can speak of non-white man as an Occidental has power to speak of an Oriental. All statements made by Orientalists and racists generate an idea of irreducible gap separating

whites from non-whites, or Occidental from Oriental.

Turner, referring to the views of Asad (1973b)

writes:

Orientalist scholarship is a rather than disguise for attitudes of moral or social superiority and thereby a justification for colonialism. Since the oriental is a matter of subject race he has to be subjected. Oriental coloured is never to be independent and rule himself. The logic behind this is that oriental non-whites are ignorant of self government, so they should be kept that way for their own well being (Turner, 1978: 85).

Racist or orientalist ideas have found expression in agencies like colonial governments. Colonial governments are the institutional forms of orientalism and racism. One might read a lot of Foucault into this. There is indeed a very close relation between orientalism as a system of knowledge and Western domination over the Orient.

As we mentioned earlier knowledge is not produced in the course of a disinterested quest for truth. Turner writes, "The underlying purpose of the institutions, disciplines and dogmas which collectively go under the label of 'orientalism' has always been to understand the Orient in order to control it". (Turner, 1981 : 256). The famous remark of Nietzsche, that the most important feature of knowledge is an expression of a more fundamental principle, "The will to power"-is particularly applicable in the case of

orientalism. Nistzsche wrote, "The measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species : a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service" (Nistzsche, 1968 : 267). Foucault also asserted that power and knowledge directly imply one another, that is, there is no power relation without the corelative form of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not pre-suppose and constitute at the same time relations of power. He wrote, "The moment when the sciences of man become possible is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body were implanted (Foucault, 1977 : 193).

THE POLITICAL UTILITY OF ORIENTALIST TEXTS : MAKING THE ORIENT PERFORM

So, if it is said that orientalism prespered with colonialism or imperialism by creating a suitable body of knowledge is not to say anything very disputable. Knowledge about the Orient drawn from orientalist texts is put to political use is an important and extremely sensitive fact. Orientalists advise governments about what to do in the Orient. It is orientalism that makes Western culture appear

more powerful by setting the Orient off against the Occident and creates a conception among Western societies that the Orient needs to be encountered, dealt with and ruled over because the Orient is not capable of doing all those by itself. Asad writes:

...the imperialist rulers could attempt to legitimise their own growing position with arguments supplied by the orientalists ; that Islamic rule has historically been oppressive rule (colonial rule is by contrast humane), that Islamic political theory recognises the legitimacy of the effective de facto rules (colonial rule is better than the corruption, inefficiency and disorder of pre-colonial rule), that political domination in muslim lands is typically external to the essential articulation of Islamic social and religious life (therefore, no radical damage has been done to Islam by conquering it as its central political traditions remains unbroken (Asad, 1973a: 274).

Regarding the formation of 'textual attitude', Said opined that a text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual and arising out of circumstances, such as when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown, threatening and previously distant and envisages the appearance of success, is not easily dismissed. Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality that appears to be described (Said, 1985 : 95). After creation of a certain type of attitude among people by their orientalist statements, what is required is no longer

simply understanding but the translation of knowledge into practice ; how the Orient must be made to perform. Thus, orientalism prepares the way for Western armies, bureaucracies, administrators to operate in the Orient. It soon became clear that orientalist institutions like colonial governments are more capable of managing, controlling and making the Orient perform. So, the orientalist changed from an author of scholarly work on the Orient to the maker of its contemporary history during the colonial period.

That Orientalist scholars never felt obliged to defer to scholars* from the Orient is indicative of the institutional threshold of Orientalist discourse and of the efficacy with which orientalism was internalised in non-Western societies. During colonial period and after that Westerners established and opened a number of academic institutions in the Orient of their own type for the spread of orientalised social sciences, philosophy, arts, languages and notions,

* H.A.R. Gibb in his review of the history of Islam from its origin to our time, bases himself on twenty authors of which only one of them is from the Orient. The colloquium on Moslem sociology (Brussels, 11-14, Sept. 1961) heard twenty speakers, not even one of them was from the Orient (Abdel-Malek, 1981 : 85).



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methods and logic of knowledge. The implication of this is that many Oriental scholars have accepted orientalist assumptions, operate in its framework, and generate orientalist writings, Western orientalists do collaborate with these internal orientalists.

But these new developments in orientalism have not brought about changes in 'latent orientalism' but, of course, in 'manifest orientalism.' For Said 'latent orientalism' is "an almost unconscious (certainly an untouchable) positivity" and 'manifest orientalism' is "the various stated views about oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology and so forth. Whatever changes occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest orientalism, the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent orientalism are more or less constant" (Said, 1985, 206).

WEBER, MARX AND ORIENTAL SOCIETIES

It is generally argued that writings on Oriental societies by non-Marxist social scientists oftenly exhibit important aspects of orientalism. Max Weber's comparative historical sociology may be cited as an example. It is important to indicate that Weber's studies of the Orient are not isolated research monographs. These studies ought to be seen in the context of a long, well established and prestigious tradition of orientalism. Weber, as is well known,

assumed a clear dichotomy between the Occident and the Orient. This is best demonstrated in Weber's search for an historical explanation which would account for the emergence and development of elements of rational capitalist production in the West. These elements, he believed, are formal law, rational religious structures, autonomous cities, the modern state, and the application of formal logic or science to every spheres of life, a demarcation between family world and business world, an ascetic way of life which transformed entrepreneurship into a 'calling' and the bureaucratization of all aspects of society. These elements of capitalist society are the institutional forms of a general process of rationalization in the society as a whole. The process of rationalization brings about alienation of individuals from every type of production - economic, mental and military. Since, the ownership of the means of production are concentrated in bureaucratic institutions and personnel, modern bureaucratic society is an 'iron cage' in which the individual is merely a 'cog'. While the individual is subjected to bureaucratic institutions, applied sciences provide the conditions for economic development and stability.

In Weber's description of Oriental society, the static Orient simply lacks the elements of rational

capitalist production. The Oriental society consists substantive law, irrational religious structures, lacks a middle class shows no evidence of private property. It is characterized by a centralized patrimonial state under prebendal form of land ownership. The City in the Orient does not provide a conducive ground for the development of urban businessmen free from adhoc political control. Weber's analysis of the Orient is based on a comparative study of feudal West and prebendal patrimonial East. In feudalism where individual land rights are inherited by a stable system of 'primogeniture or limited partibility', land-owning knights or nobles enjoy a relative freedom from the monarch in return for military service. In prebendal patrimonialism, the prebend is a non-inheritable right which is controlled by a centralized patrimonial state and therefore, a group of military man are directly subjected by the King. In this type of social formation, while religious law is unstable and property is a subject of political interference. The scope of legal ownership of private land, therefore, is very restricted. This gives rise to a tendency to avoid taking entrepreneurial risks crucial for capitalist development. Thus in Weber's comparative sociology, we find a clear dichotomy : the rational elements in

one column characterize the West and irrational elements in the other column characterize the Orient.

Thus there are many parallels between Weber's sociology and Orientalism. His use of selective affinities to construct ideal types has been critically evaluated by several authors for its prejudicial propensities (see for e.g., Colletti, 1972). Our main concern in this dissertation is not Weber but Marx a man whose contribution Weber intellectually contended against till the end. But surprisingly, inspite of their vast theoretical difference Weber used Marx appreciatively when it came to the Orient, and Marx appreciatively used British colonial records, and even Francois Bernier, without any critical reflection. In fact, we believe that Weber's concept of prebendal patrimonialism and Marx's concept of Asiatic mode of production is, to a great extent, similar in logic and elements. Weber quotes from Marx's writings in order to substantiate his arguments. Weber pays a direct compliment to Marx by declaring that Marx's insight into the absence of production for the market and payment in kind as the key to the stability of Asia 'was correct' (Weber, 1958: 111). Our contention, therefore, is that theoretical divergences converge

once methodologically a sharp dichotomy is assumed which separates the Occident from the Orient. In this context, it does not really matter very much if you are a Marxist or a Weberian. There is probably no better test case for this than the evaluation of Western Marxism from the time of Marx himself.

As is well known Marx was critical of the bourgeoisie but praised the capitalists for the enormous strides capitalism has made in a short period of time. He believed however, that the capitalist system had outlived its utility and that a socialist revolution was necessary which would liberate not just the West but all mankind.

Given such an internationalist position one does not really expect orientalist scholarship to emanate from Marx and the school of thought he founded. And yet we find that successive generation of Marxists, both in theory and practice, have rested very heavily on orientalist scholarship and assumptions. How this has been manifested by different authors and revolutionary organs in different periods in the West is the subject of our study. We are keeping out of view orientalism among oriental Marxists

because the source of orientalism is in the West though such views are also assimilated in the East to give rise what we have referred to earlier as "internalised orientalism".

SCOPE OF STUDY

In our short review of this subject we shall first begin by considering Marx's writings on the Orient, followed by the position that the Comintern took for over three decades with reference to revolutionary possibilities in the East. Finally, we shall return to more contemporary Western Marxists, including historians and anthropologists, to ascertain how orientalist thinking has affected the works of later scholars.

We shall however like to submit that our study is a very preliminary one which may be found wanting in many respects. The central issue in our dissertation is a methodological one: Why is it that theoretical differences lessen (often dissolve) among rival theoretical systems when the subject of the study is the Orient? This occurs, we believe because "Orientalist" assumptions are uncritically adhered to by mainline Western scholarship, including Marxists authors and thinkers. In the following

pages we shall try and demonstrate the depth of orientalism in the Marxist tradition. If at the end, our problem of investigation is considered valid and legitimate we shall consider our task largely accomplished.

Chapter 1

MARX AND THE CONTINUATION AND
DEVELOPMENT OF ORIENTALISM

In the following pages of this chapter we shall argue that though Marx's theory of historic evolution is universalistic he follows basic assumptions of orientalism with regard to the 'Orient'. In Marx's work the Occidental societies are subject to dialectical transformations whereas the Orient is non-dialectical and suggests an 'orientalist' method to make the Orient dynamic. If dialectic is to be inserted in Oriental societies then they must be subjected, in one way or another, to the tempo of Western bourgeois societies. This indeed was also inevitable for the bourgeoisie who were capable of "drawing all even the most barbarian nations into civilization" (Marx, 1975: 47).

CAPITALISM : FIRST UNIVERSAL MODE OF PRODUCTION

For Marx, capitalism is the first historical mode of production which has inherent characteristic elements to be general and universalistic. Since it is the most revolutionizing force in the history of human civilization, it determines the very conditions for its own existence and functioning. As Marx wrote "...the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production... The need of a constantly expanding market chases (it) over the whole surface of the globe.... (It) has, through its exploitation

of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country" (Marx, 1975: 45-46).

For Marx, the emergence and development of capitalism is characterized by unevenness which is caused by the existence of previously totally distinct 'natural' modes of production in different geographical areas of the world. Different routes of development out of primitive society are responsible for the existence of distinct modes of production at the same time. Marx distinguished three or four alternative routes out of primitive society; the Asiatic, the Ancient, the Germanic and a somewhat Slavonic form which is not further discussed but has similarities with the Asiatic (Marx, 1964: 88 & 97). The emergence of the Ancient and Germanic modes of production out of primitive communism has taken place in the Occident whereas in the Orient it is the Asiatic mode of production. This development in primitive society took place with the innovation of agriculture.

THE WESTERN LINE OF DEVELOPMENT OUT OF PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM

Both the Ancient and Germanic modes of production are expansionist, dynamic and changing modes. These modes of production produce preconditions for the emancipation

of the individual and his severing of the 'umbilical cord' that ties him to the natural community. In Germanic mode of production individual is the owner of land and it is only in this capacity that he possesses public land which plays a secondary role in the process of production. Individual landed property is not mediated by the community but the other way round. By this Marx meant that the "community has no existence as a state" and that communal property is genuinely the common property of the individual owners, and not of the union of owners distinct from that of the individual members (Hindess and Hirst, 1975 : 83). According to Hindess and Hirst's interpretation in the Germanic mode of production "the appropriation and distribution of surplus-labour is affected by ideological mechanisms of kinship and religion" (Hindess and Hirst, 1975: 83). In this mode of production the agents are more individualized which implies a greater potentiality of economic individualization. This makes the Germanic mode of production, through the feudal mode of production, the direct ancestor of capitalist mode.

The ancient mode of production involves a social division of labour between a class of direct producers mainly in the form of peasants and artisans who possess their means of production and a class of non-labourers. Here the individual is the owner of private landed property

and possesses his share of land and appropriates surplus labour by virtue of being citizen of the community-as-state. Because of this feature Hindess and Hirst argue that in "an articulation of the levels of ancient social formation... politics occupies the dominant place" (Hindess and Hirst, 1975 : 84). The existence of the ancient mode of production consists in the reproduction of the conditions of citizenship and the legal and political mechanisms of subordination. These conditions limit the scope for the development of productive forces.

Since the Ancient mode of production is not indecisive to the development of productive forces, latifundia and agriculture based industries become unprofitable and this leads to the decline of trade which in turn causes the decay of the city-as-state. Large plantations are broken up and leased to hereditary tenants. This is the beginning of the disintegration of the Ancient mode of production. This process is aided by the conflict between the large landholders (patricians) and the small landholders (Plebians) and by the invasion of Germanic people. That is why in the next mode of production, which is called 'feudal' has some elements, of course, in modified form, characteristic of both Ancient and Germanic modes of production.

In the feudal mode of production feudal lords own land and are backed by a large military organization for the appropriation of surplus labour of the serfs. The serfs are unlike the slaves, for they are economically independent producers, but whose surplus is extracted through extra-economic coercion. Here, division of labour is expressed in the clear separation of various ranks - princes, nobles, clergy and peasants in rural region and masters, journeymans, apprentices and labourers in the cities. Personal dependence is a characteristic feature of feudalism. It is the disintegration of the element of feudalism that allows for the emergence of capitalism where the defining feature is free labour.

Thus, it is quite clear that development in Western societies take place dialectically. The feudal mode of production grew out of the internal contradictions of Ancient and Germanic modes of production and the capitalist mode of production emerged out of the womb of the internal disintegration and structural pressures of feudalism.

THE UNIQUENESS AND TYPICALITY OF THE WESTERN LINE OF DEVELOPMENT

For Marx, the evolutionary development of the Occident from the Ancient and Germanic social formations to capitalism via feudalism is unique and typical. This

is because Marx believed that, this trajectory best realized the productive forces unleashed by men to dominate the nature. The exploitation of nature is accompanied by the exploitation of man which is manifested in class inequalities and struggles. Capitalism is one such manifestation, the latest in a long line, not only the most modern but also the most efficient. It is here that private property reaches its highest point. In Marx's words, "The bourgeoisie period of history has to create the material basis of the new world - on the one hand the universal intercourse founded upon the mutual dependency of man - kind, and the means of that intercourse; on the other hand the development of the productive powers of man and the transformation of material production into scientific domination of natural agencies" (Marx, 1968; 131). Not only did capitalism generate the conditions for the appearance of industrial production, of the world market and world trade, but it also created the preconditions for human society to pass beyond class society to classless society. Discussing the significance of the combination of private property and commodity production Engels opined, "Here lies the root of the entire revolution that followed" (Engels, 1972 ; 111).

In this regard especially Marx's comments on Kovalevsky's study of the dissolution of communal village property is very significant. He has criticized Kovalevsky's assimilation of Indian or Islamic social formation to those of European feudal social formation. To quote him :

On the grounds that the "benefice system", 'sale of offices' (the latter, however, is by no means purely feudal, as is proved by Rome) and 'commendation' are to be found in India - Kovalevsky regards this as feudalism in the Western European sense. Kovalevsky forgets, among other things, that serfdom - which represents an important element in feudalism - does not exist in India. Moreover, as for the individual role of feudal lords (exercising the functions of counts) as protectors not merely of surface but also of free peasants (CF. Palgrave) this plays an insignificant role in India, apart from the Waqfs. Nor do we encounter that poetry of the soil (Bodenpoesis) so characteristic of Romano-Germanic feudalism (CF. Mauren) in India, any more than in Rome. In India land is nowhere noble in the sense of being, for example, inalienable to commoners. On the other hand, Kovalevsky himself sees to one fundamental difference ; the absence of patrimonial justice in the field of civil law in the Empire of the Great Mughal (Quoted from Anderson, 1974: 406).

Marx also criticizes Kovalevsky's claims that

imposition of the Islamic land tax or Kharaj on the Indian peasantry has converted hitherto allodial into feudal property. In Marx's words, "The payment of the Kharaj did not transform their lands into feudal property, any more than the impot foncier rendered French landed property feudal. All Kovalevsky's description here are in the highest degree useless. "(quoted from Anderson, 1974: P 407). Marx also writes, "By Indian law political power was not subject to division between sons ; thereby an important source of European feudalism was blocked up "(quoted from Anderson, 1974: P 407). He also criticizes Kovalevsky for describing Turkish military colonies in Algeria as feudal, by analogy with Indian examples. To quote him, "Kovalevsky baptizes these "feudal" on the weak ground, that under certain conditions something like the Indian jagir could develop out of them" (Quoted from Anderson, 1974: 407).

MARX'S CONCEPT OF THE ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

Marx's clear conviction to particularize and to make unique and typical the western line of development has its counterpart in his positive conviction that there is a totally different rhythm and tempo out of which Oriental societies grew. Oriental societies developed out of primitive societies with the emergence of the Asiatic mode of production. To Marx, one of the

important elements of Asiatic social formation is 'the absence of private property in land'. Marx wrote to Engels, "Bernier rightly considered the basis of all phenomena in the East- he refers to Turkey, Persia and Hindostan - to be the absence of private property in land. This is the real key even to the Oriental heaven" (Marx, 1968: 427). In the Capital Marx wrote, too, that in Asiatic societies "The state is then the supreme lord, Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. But, on the other hand, no private property in land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land" (Marx, 1962: 771-772). Since, each of successive dynamic European modes of production is characterised by different forms of private property in land, it is the absence of private property in land in the Orient that makes it totally different from European historical developments.

After receiving some suggestions from Engels that the absence of private property in land is caused by the climate, taken in connection with the nature of the soil, especially with the great stretches of desert which creates the need of intensive irrigation and hence,

hydraulic works by the state, Marx wrote :

There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Governments ; that of Finances, or the plunder of the interior that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of public works. Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and water works, the basis of Oriental agriculture. As in Egypt and India, inundations are used for fertilizing the soil in Mesopotamia, Persia etc.; advantage is taken of a high level for feeding irrigation canals. This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which in the Occident, drove private enterprise to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated in the Orient where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works (emphasis added, Marx, 1968 : 85).

The institutional implications therefore, of the absence of the private property in land does not only have pure geographical co-ordinates but social -cultural as well. The fact that Oriental societies were "too low" contributed significantly in the large tracts of the Orient towards the development of the Asiatic state.

Apart from the centralizing Asiatic state another factor, again very different from anything known to Europe, which is responsible for the stationary character of

Asiatic social formation is the division of the whole state into villages. Marx wrote to Engels:

...the whole empires not counting the few larger towns, was divided into villages, each of which possessed a completely separate organization and formed a little world in itself... In some of these communities the lands of the villages are cultivated in common, in most cases each occupant tills his own field. Within (the villages) there is slavery and the caste system. The waste lands are for common pasture. Domestic weaving and spinning is done by wives and daughters. These idyllic republics, which guard jealously only the boundaries of their village against the neighbouring villages still exist in a fairly perfect form in the North-Western parts of India, which were recent English accessions. I do not think anyone could imagine a more solid foundation for stagnant Asiatic despotism. (Marx, 1968: 431-432).

Marx goes on explaining that the basis of this type of government is the 'domestic union of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits' in the village system which provides each of these small unions their independent organization and distinct life.

In Grundrisse Marx made some new innovations regarding the constituting elements of Asiatic society. Here we find that Marx isolated another characteristic feature of Asiatic society, viz., the existence of a 'self-sufficient village community'. This, he argued, was the basis of communal possession of state property of land. These village communities contain within

themselves all conditions for production and reproduction. The communality within the society appears either as a representation of its unity through the head of the tribal kinship group, or as a relationship between the heads of families. So, the manner of expression of the communality is both despotic and democratic.

Exploitation of the people directly by the State or despotic governments is another feature of Asiatic mode of production. Marx writes that Asiatic mode of production :

...is quite compatible with the fact that the all embracing unity which stands above all these small common bodies may appear as higher or sole proprietor, the real community only as hereditary possessors... The despot here appears as the father of all the numerous lesser communities, thus realizing the common unity of all. It, therefore, follows that the surplus product (which, incidentally, is legally determined in terms of the real appropriation through labour) belongs to this highest unity ... which ultimately appears as a person. Thus surplus labour is rendered both as tribute and as common labour for the glory of the unity (Marx, 1964: 69-70).

As Godelier explains, "the exploitation of man by man assumes within the Asiatic mode of production, a form which Marx called 'general slavery', distinct in essence from Graeco - Latin slavery', as it does not

exclude the personal liberty of the individual, is not a relationship of dependence vis-a-vis one another, and is achieved by the direct exploitation of one community by another" (quoted from Gupta 1980: 250). Gupta calls it 'general exploitation' because it "precludes any relationship of dependence and exchange at the lower levels" (Gupta 1980: 250).

Although Asiatic society is a society of villages, the few cities that are found to have existed here were very different in their nature and function from European cities. Marx wrote:

Cities in the proper sense arise by the side of these villages only where the location is particularly propitious to extend trade, or where the head of the state and his satraps exchange their revenue (the surplus product) against labour, which they expand as labour funds... Asian history is a kind of undifferentiated unity of town and country (the larger city properly speaking, must be regarded merely as a princely camp superimposed on the real economic structure (Marx, 1964: 71, 77-78).

In Capital, Marx returns to the position he took earlier in his correspondence with Engels and in his dispatches to New York Daily Tribune. He states again, at greater length than ever before, the importance of the peculiar structure of Indian village communities, which are prototypical of Asiatic

societies as a whole. Marx described the Indian village communities as follows:

Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which have continued down to this day, are based on possession in common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour, which serves, whenever a new community is started, as a plan and scheme ready cut and dried... The constitution of these communities varies in different parts of India. In those of the simplest form, the land is tilled in common, and the produce divided among the members. At the same time, spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work we find the 'chief inhabitant' who is judge, police, and tax-gatherer in one; the book-keeper, who keeps the account of the village and registers everything relating thereto; another official, who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man, who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water overseer, who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmins who conduct the religious services; the school master, who on the sand teaches the children reading and writing; the calendar Brahmin or astrologer, who makes known lucky or unlucky days for seed time and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all the agricultural implements; the potter who makes all the pottery of the village; the barber, the washerman, who washes clothes, the silver smith here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silver-smith, in others the school master. This dozen of individuals is maintained at the expense of the whole community. If the population increases, a new community is founded, on the pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land (Marx 1970: 357-358).

Mechanical separation of identical units, not dialectical materialism, characterises social change in such societies. These villages are the bases of immutable conservatism and stableness of the Asiatic mode of production. Changes of the dynasty or kin do not affect the nature of village communities. Marx wrote : "The simplicity of the organization for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name - this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies ..." (Marx, 1970 : 358).

Thus in Marx's conceptualisation Asiatic societies exhibit the following features; (i) the absence of private property in land; (ii) state controlled irrigation and communication system; (iii) the division of state into self sufficient village communities combining agriculture with manufacture and communal possession in land; (iv) the exploitation is 'general' inasmuch as the people are exploited as a general category by the despotic king.

Marx quite clearly subscribed to an essential duality in the evolutionary development of the world divided into the Occident which has history and the Orient which has no history. For Marx history is then development of productive forces to dominate nature and to ensure the survival of an ever increasing civilization, and the break-up of commercial relationship that develops exploitative inequalities between individuals and groups. Marx wrote, "Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive invaders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society (Marx, 1968, : 185).

HEGELIANISM IN MARX'S THESIS IN THE FORM OF AN ESSENTIAL DUALITY IN THE WORLD HISTORY

It may be argued that to pre-suppose, as Marx did, an essential duality in the historical development of the world is a species of Hegelianism (see for e.g. Avineri 1968a & 1968b; Lichtheim 1963; Hindess and Hirst, 1975). According to Hindess and Hirst, "To suppose an essential duality in the history of the world and an essential duality in Marxist theoretical explanation between the West, the essence of which is technological development towards freedom and the self-realisation of humanity

through the mechanism of contradiction, and the East, the essence of which is a static repetition of the existing conditions of backwardness and despotism, is to impose a vigorously Hegelian philosophy of history upon Marxism"(Hindess and Hirst, 1975 : 203).

For Hegel the distinction between the East and the West is not a geographical division. It is an essential division of the "World spirit". The essence of the Spirit is freedom. The realisation of the Spirit in the East is lower and partial whereas in the West it is total and higher. This is manifested in the dynamism and development in the latter sphere of the globe. Hegel unambiguously put forward the proposition that in the Oriental World, nothing subjective clearly expresses the essence of the Eastern Spirit.

The Oriental World has its inherent and distinctive principle the Substantial (the Prescriptive), in Morality. We have the first example of a subjugation of the mere arbitrary will, which is merged in this substantiality. Moral distinctions and requirements are expressed in Laws, but so that the subjective will is governed by these Laws as by an external force. Nothing subjective in the shape of disposition, Conscience, formal Freedom, is recognised. Justice is administered only on the basis of external morality, and Government exists only as the prerogative of compulsion" (Hegel, 1956 : 111).

Furthermore, he argued, "Since the external and the internal, Law and Moral Sense, are not yet distinguished - still from an undivided unity - so also do Religion and the State... What we call God has not yet in the East been realized in consciousness.... (Hegel, 1956 : 112).

Quite naturally, Hegel went on to argue, this absence of the subjective and super sensual consciousness in the Orient results in the conceptualization of the "one individual as the substantial being to which all belongs, so that no other individual has a separate existence.... On the one side we see duration, stability - Empires belonging to mere space as it were... unhistorical History.... The States in question, without undergoing any change in themselves, or in the principle of their existence, are constantly changing their position toward each other.... Thus history, too, is for the most part, really unhistorical, for it is only the repetition of the same majestic ruin"(Hegel, 1956: 105-106). These lines could well have been written by Marx himself (see Marx, 1970 :358).

Should one be surprised then if we find that Hegel's characterization of Indian village community as the basis of despotism, unaffected by the political changes in the state, quite similar to Marx's analysis.

To quote Hegel :

The whole income belonging to every village is, as already stated, divided into two parts, of which one belongs to Rajah, the other to cultivators; but proportionate shares are also received by the provost of the place, the Judge, the water surveryor, the Brahmins who superintends religious worship, the Astrologer (who is also a Brahmin, and announces the days of good and ill omen), the Smith, the carpenter, the Potter, the Washerman, the Barber, the Physician, the Dancing girls, the musician, the poet. This arrangement is fixed and immutable and subject to no one's will. All political revolutions therefore, are matters of indifference to the common Hindu, for his lot is unchanged (Hegel, 1956 : 161).

We have quoted this passage in detail to drive home the similarity between Hegel and Marx. Indeed Marx very often seems to but paraphrase Hegel on this subject (see Marx, 1970 : 357-358).

COLONIALISM AS AN INEVITABLE HISTORICAL NECESSITY

Since Marx states that the ultimate victory of socialism is dependent on the prior universalisation of capitalist mode of production, he, like other Orientalist of nineteenth century, arrives at the position of having to endorse European colonialism as a brutal but necessary method for bringing about capitalism in the Orient. This is tantamount to providing an orientalist justification for the need for colonialism. In order to make colonial expansion successful Marx, like

other official orientalists, very often provided suggestions to Western governments, through his writings as to how to operate in the Orient.

Marx's reading of European colonialism is based on the distinction between subjective motivation and objective historical results. To him the motives and rationalisations behind colonialism are irrelevant. What is relevant and important is the consequence of colonialism. For instance Marx wrote :

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution (Marx, 1968: 89).

Another article written by Marx also presents this view, "England has to fulfill a double mission in India : one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundation of Western society in Asia" (Marx, 1968 :125).

Not just British colonialism in India but even the French occupation of Algeria encouraged Engels to write glowingly, "The conquest of Algeria is an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilization....

And the conquest of Algeria has already forced the Beys of Tunis and Tripoli and even emperor of Morocco to enter upon the road of civilization (quoted from Marx, 1968 : 43). Again British intervention in China prompted Marx to say, "Before the British army the authority of the Manchu dynasty, fell to pieces; the supersititious faith with the eternity of celestial empire broke down; the barbarous and hermetic isolation from the civilized world was infringed (Marx, 1968, 62-63).

It was this faith in the "civilizing" role of colonialism that led Marx to recommend direct and complete control over Oriental societies, by European colonialists. British direct control over India undermined the hitherto prevailing "combination of husbandry with manufacturing industry". But in China the incomplete control by the British has left Chinese consumption pattern unchanged (Marx 1968; 370-375). In the Capital Marx also wrote;

The obstacles presented by internal solidity and organization of pre-capitalist national modes of production to the corrosive influence of commerce are strikingly illustrated in the intercourse of the English with India and China. The broad basis of the mode of production is formed here by unity of small-scale agriculture and home industry, to which in India we should add the form of village communities built upon the common ownership of land, which, incidently,

was the original form in China as well. In India the English lost no time in exercising their direct political and economic power as rulers and landlords to disrupt these small economic communities. English commerce exerted a revolutionary influence on these communities. And even so, this work of dissolution proceeds very slowly. And still more so in China, where it is reinforced by direct political power (Marx, 1962 : 392-393).

Further prognostication on a world scale followed a similar logic. If the socialist revolution occurs in Europe and if European capitalist colonial expansion had not revolutionized Asiatic societies enough, then in this case, Engels wrote to Kautsky, the European proletarian government should take over control of the colonies (see Marx 1968 : 447-448). There was, therefore, no scope for sympathy for Marx or Engels, for that matter, on the question of supporting revolt in the colonies against European domination. The 1857 revolt in India signified if anything to Marx, the native preference for the continuation of the Asiatic mode of production. While discussing the Indian Revolt of 1857 he wrote, "The Indian revolt does not commence with the ryots, tortured, dishonoured and stripped naked by the British, but with the sepoy, clad, fed and patted, fatted and pampered by them. To find parallels to the sepoy atrocities, we need not... fall back on the middle ages, nor even wander beyond the history of contemporary England" (Marx, 1968,

212). He went on to argue that after their defeat the mutineers would turn into robbers far more lawless, drunken, brutal, rabble, violent and greedy than the sepoys. So, penalty is required not only by justice but by political necessity. In several dispatches Marx provided specific suggestions about how to quench the rebellion and to restore order. On one occasion he indignantly wrote, "One is startled by the conduct of the British commander at Meerut - his late appearance on the field being still less incomprehensible than the weak manner he pursued the mutineers" (Marx, 1968 : 183-184). A similar lack of sympathy can be discerned in Marx's attitude towards the Taiping rebellion and Moorish war. The Taipings, Marx believed, were "an even greater scourge to the population than the old rulers. The Taipings are the apostles of destruction in grotesque horrifying form, without any seeds for a renaissance.... All the hooligans, vagabonds and evil characters of every distinct may join the troops.... The Taipings are an enormous mass of nothingness (Marx, 1968 : 418-420). Regarding the Moorish war we get a similar reaction from Marx : "From the Moors we cannot expect anything but irregular fighting, carried on with the bravery and cunning of semi-savages. But even in this they appear deficient" (Marx, 1968 : 383).

RACISM IN MARX'S WRITINGS

Sometimes Marx, like other orientalists, provided straight forward ethnic or racial explanations of historical situations. Regarding the American Blacks he wrote: "The present generation of Negroes in America, is becoming a native product, more or less Yankified English speaking, and therefore, fit for emancipation" (emphasis added, Marx, 1968 : 430). About India and Hindu religion he stated that India is, "A country not only divided between Mohemmadan and Hindoo, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste... Such a country and such a society, were they not the predestined prey of conquest?" (Marx, 1968: 123). Elsewhere Marx opined that Hindu "religion is at once a religion of exuberance, and a relation of self-torturing asceticism; a religion of Lingam, and of the Juggernaut; the religion of the Monk, and of the Bayadere" (Marx, 1968 : 81). His statements regarding Turkey are revealing too: "Turkey, the splendid territory conglomerate of different races and nationalities has the misfortune to be ruled by Islam. Fanaticism of Islam overturned any progress that might have been made" (Marx, 1968 : 48): About Sikhs Marx wrote that Sikhs "are brave, passionate, fickle, they are even more subject to sudden and unexpected impulses than the other orientals" (Marx, 1968 : 331).

MARX'S ORIENTALISM : THE CONTINUATION OF A TRADITION

Marx's ideas, like ideas of other academic orientalist, about colonialism is not different from colonial government and administrators. There are startling similarities in statements made by colonial authorities and those made by Marx. Even the style and structure of statements are to a large extent similar. For example, Arthus James Balfour, a long time member of parliament and former Prime Minister of England, makes the following statement about the Orient, "First of all, look at the facts of the cases, Western nations, as soon as they emerge into history, show the beginning of those capacities for self-government.... having merits of their own.... You may look through the whole history of the orientals which is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-government. All their great centuries - and they have been very great - have been passed under despotisms, under absolute governments.... It is a good thing these great nations that this absolute government should be exercised by us. I think it is good thing. I think that experience show that they have got under it far better government than the whole history of the world they ever had before" (quoted from Said, 1985 : 32-33).

Orientalism has a long tradition in the West. Bodin, Bacon, Machiavelli, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, Richard Jones, Harrington, Montesquieu, not to mention Hegel were all conditioned by it (see Anderson 1974 : 472). The fact that Marx too subscribed to the idea of regenerating the lifeless Orient through colonialism (a pure piece of imperial orientalism), is really puzzling because it comes ^{from} a person who was fighting against the exploitation of the masses in Europe. It seems that this is because of the already existing consolidated large body of orientalism both in academic and non-academic realms that the nature of statement made by Marx, or in this matter anyone, about the Orient. After all, orientalism is a set of statements, references, imageries and quotations. Even the terms Marx used to denote Oriental people such as "barbarian", "savage", "marauding" robber "idiotic race" "rabbits", "yellow man", "the living fossil" etc. are quite in keeping with the long tradition of orientalism in the West. With all the sympathy of the misery of people and sensitiveness to the human sufferings Marx remains a western orientalist thinker unable to shake off an Occidental perspective when it came to viewing "other cultures".

In recent years, an effort has been made, by using Althusser's notion of an 'epistemological break' in the

theoretical development of Marx's ideas, to prove that Marx was not an orientalist in the final analysis. According to Althusser it is possible to divide Marx's writings into distinctive periods. Marx's early idealistic-humanism period which is eventually replaced in his later years by scientific materialism (Althusser, 1977). Turner argues in the same lines too: "My argument has been following Althursser, that there is an epistemological break in Marx's work and that Marx's journalism does not provide the basis for a scientific analysis of Asian social formation"(Turner, 1978 : 82). On these grounds it is often claimed that the concept of Asiatic mode of production and Marx's method regarding how to change the Orient are the creation of the "Young Marx" which matured 'Old Marx' had abandoned. But this attempt is really quite futile for as we have shown Orientalist statements abound even in the Capital - the supreme work of the later Marx. Apart from it, Orientalism has no definite structure. It can be traced at many levels. As a matter of fact it is not at all surprising that there should be a schism in Marx's works. Orientalism infact compels such a schism for it proceeds on the assumption that humanity is divided. Thus while Marx issued a critique of political economy with regard to the West, he fell in line with the Western tradition when it came to the Oriental world. This theoretical inconsistency

can only make sense once we appreciate the cardinal principle of orientalism which strictly dichotomises Western civilization from Oriental civilization, Western culture from Eastern culture, and finally Occidental people from the "Orientals".

Chapter 2

THE COMINTERN : 'INTERNATIONALIST'
AND YET 'ORIENTALIST'

At this point we make a slight digression in our dissertation in order to take into account how the schism in Marx's views on account of his orientalist thinking was reflected in the Communist movement after the Russian revolution. In this chapter, we will quickly review the functioning of the Communist International - or the Comintern, and evaluate the extent to which orientalist assumptions governed many of its activities and determined several of its positions.

The Third International, which is called the Communist International or Comintern, was founded in Moscow in March 1919 on the initiative of the Bolshevik Party. Unlike the First and Second Internationals the Comintern was not a loose federation of groups and national parties, but a centrally organized single party on a world scale which survived twenty-four years. Since, the Comintern was formed on the initiative of the Russian Communist Party after the victory of the 1917 October Revolution, it is quite natural that the organisational structure and shape of the Comintern is similar to that of the Bolshevik Party (see Caballero, 1986 : 16). Its regular channels flowed from top to bottom only, making the Comintern not merely a centralised organization, but a vertical one too.

In the Comintern, right from the very beginning, the Bolshevik Party was the most dominant for the simple fact that it had the largest number of voters in the Executive Committee (Degras, 1971, Vol.3, p. 165). Though the Comintern was an avowedly international and internationalist organisation it too often characterized the Orient and the Occident as two different worlds. The fate of the Oriental people was always dependent on the West because the Orient cannot be transformed into a socialist society unless and until there is a socialist revolution in the West. The working masses in the form of peasantry are not capable of liberating their countries from the yoke of imperialism. Neither were Marxist spokespeople from the Orient seen as equal to the European Marxists in terms of their theoretical sophistication. At various crucial moments it over rode the views of non-European Marxist leaders and sometimes for very national interest. Our emphasis in this chapter will be to dwell on this contradiction, viz., that between the Comintern being internationalist and yet denying the Orient its impulses to transform.

FIDELITY TO MARX'S ORIENTALISM

It cannot however be denied that the Comintern paid more attention to the situations of the Orient

than other Internationals before it. Yet first hand knowledge of Oriental societies was still limited and continued to be refracted through Western writings on the Orient. In this respect, Marx's theorisation of the Asiatic social formation was very useful to the Comintern for it provided a conceptual lever for comprehending the Orient. In fact, the Comintern never questioned the validity of Marx's understanding of the Orient and his conceptualization of the 'Asiatic mode of production'.

Madiar who worked for the Comintern and was in the Soviet diplomatic service in China in 1926-7, relied extensively on the concept of Asiatic mode of production. We quote at length an extract from one of his reports to demonstrate how his fidelity to Marx's concept remained unshaken inspite of his first hand experience of China. According to Madiar:

The basic class division of Oriental society is between the fundamental masses of the peasants, joined together in communes, and the former servants of the commune, who have separated themselves from the commune and formed themselves into a ruling class (The priests in Egypt, the literati in ancient China, and so on). The form of government is despotism. Private land ownership is absent. The supreme owner of the land and water, the basic conditions for production, is the state. The basic economic form of exploitation is the tax, which coincides with rent. The ruling class exploits the commune, extracting the surplus product in the form of a tax or rent. The economic form of extraction of surplus product

by income of tax which coincides with rent undoubtedly likens this form of exploitation to the feudal system. The absence of feudal property and a class of feudal lords constitutes the primary difference between Oriental and feudal society. In view of this it is necessary to emphasize that in Oriental society the conduct of the class war was confined to the struggle between the peasants of the commune and the state of rent and tax collectors...and there was frequently a struggle between the various castes (Madiar, 1981 : 90-92).

At the Baku Congress (1920) Marbutabekov stated quite explicitly : "There exist two worlds: the Western world and the Eastern world. You are aware that in the course of its historical development over many centuries the West has several times changed its forms of government, beginning with the most despotic form and ending with liberal ones in a democratic republic, whereas in the East the form of government has not changed... The Western world and the Eastern world are in this respect diametrically opposed" (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 173). Explicit unadorned Orientalism! The schism between East and West is an uncontested fact.

The Comintern, like Marx, saw the Orient as a homogeneous whole which was incapable of change for it was outside the scope of historical materialism. The members of the Comintern, in large measure ignored highly complex and diverse realities of the Orient.

This becomes manifest in Roy's remarks. At the Fourth Congress M.N. Roy clearly stated: We thought that, simply because they (countries of the East) were all politically, economically and socially backwards we could lump them all together, and deal with this problem as though it were a general problem. But this was a mistake. We know today that the Eastern countries cannot be taken as a homogenous whole, neither politically, economically nor socially " (Encausse and Schram, 1969; 190).

Although the Comintern accepts Marx's basic assumption that colonialism has brought about capitalist mode of production in the Asiatic society, but at the same time, the Comintern also opined that Asiatic mode of production had not yet been completely replaced (see Madiar, 1981 : 94). In fact, as the Sixth Congress state there was overwhelming view which saw the "predominance of the 'Asiatic mode of production' both in the economy and in the political superstructure in colonial and semi-colonial countries" (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 236). Both Varya and Riazanov in their analysis show that Chinese social formation is characterised by an intermingling of the external capitalist mode of production with the indigenous Asiatic one (Bailey and Llobera, 1981 : 51). But orientalism of

the Comintern is manifested not only in its theoretical understanding but also in the practice of various policies, strategies and tactics. Here, it should be made clear that the abandonment of the concept of Asiatic mode of production by Stalin is not because of his doubt about the relevance and validity of the concept but because of the problem that the concept was causing in 'his victory over the Bolshevik Party'. Stalin abandoned the concept of the Asiatic mode of production because there were many leaders even in the Bolshevik Party who were creating problems for Stalin by arguing that the nationalisation of the land and the commune system just after the Revolution would be the basis of the emergence of the Asiatic mode of production because Russia was not a developed capitalist society at the time of the Revolution.

EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS AS PRE-CONDITION TO ORIENTAL REVOLUTION

The inner logic of the Comintern's strategy for socialist revolution in the Asiatic countries was based on various orientalist assumptions. Since the Oriental countries, unlike Western ones, are characterized by the absence of proletariat as a powerful force, the liberation of the world must wait for the socialist revolution in the West. Although the First Congress of

the Comintern paid very little attention to the problems of Oriental countries, it nevertheless expressed very clearly the orientalist idea that :

The emancipation of the colonies is possible only in conjunction with the emancipation of the metropolitan working class. The workers and peasants not only of Annam, Algiers and Bengal, but also of Persia and Armenia, will gain the opportunity of independent existence only when the workers of England and France have overthrown Lloyd George and Clemenceau and taken state power into their own hands (Degras, 1971 : Vol.1, p. 43).

The view of the Comintern was endorsed by many Communist leaders. Lenin during a debate in Plenary Session in July 1920 says, "The Communist International must lay down and give the theoretical grounds for, the proposition that, with the aid of the proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward countries may pass to the Soviet system and, after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism" (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 159). Sultan-zade argued, "Let us suppose that the Communist revolution begins today in India. Will the workers of that country be able to resist the onslaught of the bourgeoisie without the aid of a great revolutionary movement in England and in all Europe? Assuredly not " (Encausse and Schram, 1969, 164). Likewise in 1920 at the Baku Congress Povlovic announce, "Comrades we must not forget the

simple truth that the people of the East shall not be able to achieve their freedom without joining forces with the proletariat of all countries" (Encausse and Schram, 1969: 176). Safarov, in 1920, in his paper "The East and Communism" wrote very strongly against medieval prejudices in Muslim countries when he advocated the supremacy of a Western Revolution. He said, that, "only the development of proletarian revolution in Europe makes the victory of agrarian-peasant revolution in the East possible. If the indigenous bourgeoisie of the Eastern Muslim countries cannot rid itself of medieval prejudices, the peasant masses are even less able to take up an independent position in the struggle for national and social liberation" (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 180). Trotsky also opined, while speaking on the prospect of revolution in China, that revolutionary activity in the Orient cannot be successful unless the capitalist West is transformed into the socialist West (Trotsky, 1957).

Interestingly, however, the reverse is not emphasised. The West requires no assistance from the Orient to transform itself. Even Lenin remarked "Comrade Roy goes too far when he asserts that the fate of the West depends exclusively on the degree of development and the strength of the revolutionary movement in the

Eastern countries"(quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 248). The fate of the Orient, needless to say, is dependent on the West to such extent that any positive change in colonial countries is the result of the activities of the imperialist countries.

The first wide discussion on issues related to Oriental societies took place at the Second Congress of the Comintern. Claudin (1975 : 246) writes that this, to a large extent, was because of three phenomena: first, the ebbing of the proletarian revolutionary tide in Europe; second, an experience of considerable upsurge of the anti-imperialist national liberation movement in Oriental countries; and third, the emergence of 'national and colonial question'.

Nevertheless, the second Congress, inspite of strong resistance of Western representatives such as the Italian leader Serrati, had to modify the extreme 'Eurocentrist' line of the First Congress. Serrati was opposing national liberation movements in the Oriental countries carried on by the peasants. He opined, "on the whole, the entire struggle for national liberation carried on... is not a revolutionary movement. It usually serves the interest of national imperialism striving to rise to the surface"(quoted from Munck, 1986 : 90). Yet because of the presence of the

three phenomena mentioned earlier the Comintern had to assign to the liberation movement of the Oriental people an important role in the world socialist revolutionary process. But this they did without giving up the orientalist conception in which the proletariat of the West and the transformation effected by them in Western societies, are decisive factors for world revolution. This can be gauged from the the further policies and functioning of the Comintern.

However, in practice the Comintern after the Second Congress, did not alter its organized orientalist outlook. Infact at the Fourth Congress Safarov critically commented: "In spite of the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International, the Communist parties of the imperialist countries have done extraordinarily little to deal with the national and colonial questions....worse still, the flag of communism is used to hide chauvinist ideas foreign and hostile to proletarian Internationalism" (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 193).

An influential wing of the European communist movement also believed that sovereignty and independence should not come too quickly to non-Western societies. Plainly a large number of them had not been civilised enough. They might easily revert to the stage of

despotism and savagery. Their dependence on the West is an historical necessity. A section of French Communist Party, which is called Side-bel-Abdes, clearly put this view forward in a letter to the Comintern on 27 June 1922. This letter stated, and we quote at length:

If an Egyptian sovereignty is necessary, a sovereignty of Cannibals is undesirable ... Now, a victorious revolt of the Muslim masses of Algeria which would not be posterior to a similar victorious revolt of the proletariat masses of the mother country, would inevitably bring Algeria back to a regime close to feudality, result which cannot be the objective of a communist action. In the case of a premature Arab sovereignty, communist states have to be liberated from the yoke of Muslim feudalism...we can assert that slavery will be amplified, because the fact of possessing slaves, in the strict sense of the word, is a Muslim tradition in Algeria... The nations of North Africa are, for the most part, composed of Arabs resistant to the economic, social, intellectual and moral evolution indispensable to individuals in order to form an autonomous state capable of reaching communist perfection. So, the liberation of native proletariat of North Africa will be the fruit of only the revolution in the mother country, and that the best way in which to 'aid... every liberating movement' in our colony is not to 'abandon' this colony, but on the contrary to remain there..." (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 196).

Although this view stated was not wholly endorsed by the Comintern it definitely gives an indication of the pervasivity of orientalist thinking of some noted communists of the West. The view quoted above, is similar in its content to the views expressed by

Van Kol in the Second Communist International when he said that "the Europeans must accomplish their civilizing mission fully armed, if they did not want to be eaten by the cannibals" (Encausse and Schram, 1969; 16).

ORIENTAL COMMUNIST PARTIES AS INCAPABLE OF INDEPENDENT
REVOLUTIONARY ACTION ; EXAMPLE OF TURKEY AND CHINA

The Comintern's orientalist outlook prevented it from visualising revolutionary potentialities of the peasant masses of colonial and semi-colonial countries. This often proved disastrous for the revolutionary mass of the Orient. For the Comintern, only proletariat and bourgeoisie are capable of fighting against any imperialist power whereas working masses in the form of peasantry are not. As Trotsky said: "One conclusion, at any rate, is indisputable. The experience of 'peasant' parties...have all shown beyond question that in the epoch of capitalist decline there is even less reason than in the epoch of rising capitalism to look for independent, revolutionary anti-bourgeois peasant parties" (Encausse and Schram, 1969; 242). At another place he wrote, "It will be possible to speak seriously about the perspective of an agrarian revolution only on the condition that there will be a new mounting wave of proletarian movement on the offensive" (Trotsky, 1957 : 145).

At the second Congress, Lenin's draft thesis which was accepted by the Congress, with some modification, substantiate the above arguments. Lenin argued that the Comintern "must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries because for a long time to come the leadership of the colonial revolution would remain locally in the hands of the national bourgeoisie", (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 261). Lenin also opined that the proletariat due to extreme numerical, economic and ideological weakness was unable for a long time yet to play a leading role in the national liberation movement. The following passage taken from his speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern is highly significant in this connection :

It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming masses of the population in the backward countries consisting of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationship. It would be utopian to believe that proletarian parties in these backward countries, if indeed they can emerge in them, can pursue Communist tactics and a Communist policy without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 263).

In this context it would be interesting to see what happened in 1920 in Turkey. In 1920 Mustafa Kamal Pasha got a positive reply for military and

economic aid from Soviet Russia. Kamal did get ten million roubles and substantial quantity of arms although at that time Russia was running through economic difficulties. And in 1921 a treaty of friendship and aid was signed between them. From the viewpoint of the anti-imperialist struggle of Oriental people Russia's help to Kamal Pasha seems quite logical, but the situation is complicated by the policy of Kamalists towards the Turkish Communist party. Kamalists, on the one hand were fighting against colonial power, but on the other hand, they were also busy in annihilating the peasant movement led by the Turkish Communist party. Well known Communist leaders were arrested, strangled and their bodies thrown into the sea. Some Communists were put on trial for 'high treason'. But, even this tragic event did not influence the attitude and understanding of the prominent leaders of the Comintern. After the disaster Karl Radek in 1922 calmly said: "We do not regret for a moment that we said to the Turkish Communists, your first duty, once you have organized yourselves in an independent party will be to support the national liberation movement" (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 193).

In the Fifth Congress, the Comintern gave priority to the idea of a unified China under Sunyatsen and his party the Kuomintang, over issues which related to the development of communism in China. The Comintern forced the Chinese Communist party, mainly based among the peasant masses, to become an integral party of the Kuomintang. Members of the Communist party were also to become the members of the Kuomintang. In March, 1926 the Kuomintang also became a member of the Comintern as a 'sympathizing party' and Chiang Kai-Shek an 'honorary member' of the Presidium. All these was in line with the Comintern's position that "neither the Communist system nor even the Soviet system can be introduced in China. The common aim must be unification and national independence. And communists must submit to the Kuomintang's discipline" (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 276).

A year later in April 1927 thousands of communists and revolutionary workers including prominent leaders were savagely murdered or put behind bars by the Kuomintang. The Comintern described this event as an act of the 'right wing' of the Kuomintang. But in July just after three months the so-called 'left Kuomintang' did the same work by expelling Communists from party and the army, murdering

and imprisoning them. By the beginning of 1928 the Kuomintang nearly crushed the whole working class movement including peasantry movement led by the Chinese Communist party.

Immediately after the massacre of Chinese Communists the leading organs of the Comintern like true orientalist blamed the Chinese Communist party and especially its leader Chen Tu-hsiu for this event. Bukharin very clearly expressed the view of the leadership of the Comintern in his report at the Sixth Congress : "On the whole it is not the main line of tactics that was at fault, but the political actions and the practical application of the line pursued in China. They (the Communists) did not prepare uprisings with sufficient care, they displayed glaring putschist tendencies and adventurism of the worst kind" (Enc_ause and Schram, 1969 : 232-233).

On 15 May 1926 the executive committee of the Kuomintang passed a resolution under which the Chinese Communist party had to hand over the complete list of Communist members of the Kuomintang. Communists would no longer be allowed to accept leading positions in the Kuomintang and their share of the membership of

the party and state ^paparatuses must not exceed one-third of the total. The communists could not form factions in the Kuomintang. The Communist party has to submit its own directives and those received from the Comintern for approval to a mixed committee comprised of members from both the Kuomintang and Communist parties.

While submitting to the discipline of the Kuomintang, the leaders of the Chinese Communist party suggested to Borodin, representative of the Bolshevik party that some of the arms being sent by the Soviet government for the Kuomintang army should be used to arm the military units controlled by communists in order to prepare against a new possible attack by Chiang after the attack of 1926. The suggestion was rejected. Protesting against this Chen Tu-hsiu writes, "The present period is a period of which the communists should do the coolie service for the Kuomintang" (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 280).

COMINTERN AS AN INSTRUMENT OF THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

We must therefore also entertain the possibility that the Comintern helped the Oriental bourgeois parties not because it was very anxious to bring about revolutionary change in the Oriental

countries but because of the vested interests of the Bolshevik Party - the most powerful party in the Comintern. In order to make Russia a dominant power and to counteract the anti-Soviet movement led by Britain and America, the Bolshevik Party saw possible allies in the Oriental bourgeoisie. This is because communism cannot be on the agenda in the East if it has not yet triumphed in the West. Some historical facts clearly substantiate this point.

The Bolshevik Party signed the treaty with Kamal Pasha after the massacre of the Turkish communists and peasant masses. This fact makes it very clear that how Bolshevik Party was concerned in making alliance that would safeguard its interests, such as the security of the southern frontiers, the navigation on the Black Sea, among others. Although, the Third Congress adopted a resolution protesting against the suppression of German communists after the 'March Action' it expressed not even a single sentence about the killings of Turkish communists. This is because it feared that if the problem was discussed by the Congress, there was a greater probability of a breach with Kamal. Moreover, the

German communists were after all Europeans. Similarly, the Comintern did not discuss crucial Chinese issues when the Kuomintang was mercilessly annihilating the communist forces from China. It maintained the cooperative relationship with the Kuomintang even after a series of mass killing of Chinese communists.

LACK OF EMPATHY WITH THE ORIENT ; MARGINALISING OF ORIENTAL COMMUNISTS

Like an orientalist authority, the Comintern, at the Third Congress, did not consider it important or crucial to try and understand the oriental situation through their spokespeople. For example, it gave only five minutes to Roy to speak on these issues. In the words of Roy :

I have been allowed five minutes for my report (on India). As this theme cannot be dealt with adequately even in an hour, I wish to employ these five minutes for an energetic protest. The way in which the Eastern question has been dealt with at this Congress is purely opportunistic, and is worthy rather of a Congress of the Second International. It is absolutely impossible to draw any practical conclusions whatever from the few sentences which the Eastern delegations have been allowed to speak (Enc. ausse and Schram, 1989 : 18).

Undermining of communists from the East was a regular feature of the Comintern. At the Fifth Congress, as Claudin writes that Katayama, representing the

Japanese Communist Party, stated that Zinoviev and Varga- two Communist leaders of the Comintern-has scarcely mentioned any Eastern question in their long report and thesis and they take account of no other countries except Europe and America (Claudin, 1975 : 249). Seamaun, representing the Indonesian Communist Party, complained about the passive attitude of the Dutch Communist Party towards colonial problems. Wolfe, representing the Mexican Communist Party, also said: "The attention of the European proletariat should be drawn to the fact that in the Latin American peoples it and the Comintern have a potential and powerful ally. It appeared that the Communist International did not sufficiently realize this" (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 249).

Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) at the Fifth Congress in July 1924 gave vent to this anguish in his speech :

I am here in order to draw the attention of the International unlivingly to the fact that colonies exist and point out to it, apart from having to solve the problem of the future of the colonies, it faces a danger in the colonies....I shall use of every available opportunity and, if necessary, see such opportunities in order to awaken you to the colonial question" (quoted from Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 199).

It is not surprising that leaders like Ho, Mao and Roy were never given much importance by the Comintern because these men gave the communists movement in their own countries prime importance. In fact Roy reversed the time table of World revolution when he said: "The fate of revolutionary movement in Europe depends entirely on the course of the revolution in the East. Without the victory of the revolution in the Eastern countries, the communist movement in the West would come to nothing" (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 247). Roy's argument is based on the assumption that due to the resources drawn from the Oriental colonies, capitalism is in a position to make economic concessions to the proletariat of Europe in order to maintain the system, Therefore, Roy argues, "The European working class will not succeed in overthrowing the capitalist order until this source has been definitely cut off" (quoted from Claudin, 1975 : 247).

Like Roy, Ho Chi Minh had also expressed similar views. He said at the Fifth Congress :

It seems to me that comrades have not thoroughly grasped the idea that the destiny of the world proletariat and especially of that of the colonizing countries, is closely bound up with the destiny of the oppressed classes in the colonies....All of you know that at present the poison and vital

capacity of the imperialist viper are concentration in the colonies rather than in the metropolitan countries. The colonies provide raw materials for its factories. The colonies supply soldiers for its army. The colonies will serve it as a mainstay of counter revolution. And yet, you, in speaking of the revolution, neglect the colonies!.... In discussing the possibility of and the means for accomplishing the revolution and in drawing up your plan for the coming war, you British and French comrades and also comrades from other parties have completely lost sight of this extraordinary important strategic point (Encausse and Schram, 1969 : 199-200).

Right or wrong, there existed during those years a division of opinion between communist spokespeople of the East and non-European countries and the important spokespeople of the Comintern. Communists from India, China, Peru, Mexico all voiced their opposition to Comintern's prescriptions to the communist parties in these countries. We have dealt at length with China here but it is illustrative that leaders like Jose Carlo Mariategui and Julio Antonio Mella from Peru, also expressed deep doubts about the Comintern's positions regarding Latin America (see Munck, 1986 : 96). The Comintern then inspite of its internationalist manifesto was still very European in its outlook and its "orientalism" can scarcely be concealed.

Chapter 3

ORIENTALISM IN MODERN MARXISM
WHERE SUPERSTRUCTURE IS INFRA-
STRUCTURE - A CRITIQUE

It is not as if there exists no break in the Marxist tradition in the West concerning the Orient. Yet a large number of influential Western Marxist still abide by the cardinal orientalist tenet that clearly separates the East from the West. The Hegelian dichotomous model of the dynamic Occident and the stagnant Orient is not entirely foresaken. Though some concepts like the Asiatic mode of production may have undergone radical revisions, these very authors however, will not hesitate to exclude Oriental societies from the tempo of dialectical materialism and class struggle. One interesting way by which this is achieved by these modern Marxists, is by considering what would be elements of the superstructure in Oriental social formations as both infrastructure and superstructure. For example, irrigation-agriculture and other economic activities are supposed to require the state, caste system, religion, kinship system, etc. as its pre-conditions for existence. The manner in which certain Marxist explanation link the superstructure with particular form of production remind us of the functionalist with whom, on European terrain, Marxists would have serious disagreements. To substantiate

the above arguments an analysis of the texts of Wittfogel, Avineri and Perry Anderson will be made in this chapter.

WITTFOGEL'S THEORY OF THE ORIENTAL SOCIETY

Karl Wittfogel's various texts constitute an important contribution in Marxist scholarship dedicated towards understanding Asiatic societies. Wittfogel's central thesis is that there are pre-industrial forms of totalitarian state systems whose basic traits can be captured by the concept of 'Oriental despotism'. These states arise as a result of the necessities of large scale irrigation for agriculture. Wittfogel's conceptualization of despotism based upon the control of water resources can be traced back to Marx quite easily (see Chapter II).

In Wittfogel's hands the term 'oriental despotism' connotes an "extremely harsh form of absolutist power". For him the essence of Oriental or hydraulic despotism is bureaucratic-managerial control (Wittfogel, 1963:101). But Wittfogel also points out the role of human choice in this connection. He argues that in the very beginning the primitive tribes faced a dilemma either to move to 'hydraulic' agriculture and to

succumb to despotism, or to maintain the low level of economy with 'freedom of personality'. The Oriental people chose despotism and the Occidental people maintained the 'freedom of personality'. The Peoples of the Orient who chose despotism stand against the 'primordially free' peoples of the West (Wittfogel, 1963 : 17).

Wittfogel asserts that the Orient despotic state identifies itself with the divine order and makes socio-economic aspects of the populace appear as the creation of its will and benevolence alone. That is why the state legitimises itself through theocratic ideological forms. Theocracy remained a constant feature of Oriental societies (Wittfogel, 1963 : 99). Legitimation of state through theocratic rules needed its control over religion which it did successfully. In his words : "The hydraulic state, which permitted neither relevant independent military nor proprietary leadership, did not favor the rise of independent religious power either. Nowhere in hydraulic societies did (even) the dominant religion place itself outside the authority of the state" (Wittfogel, 1963 : 83). State control over religion means no difference between secular authority and religious

authority and integration of the dominant religion in the power system of the state. As he writes, "the supreme representative of secular authority is also the embodiment of supreme religious authority" (Wittfogel, 1963 : 90). Apart from dominant religion any other religion is suppressed. To quote Wittfogel again, "Followers of (secondary religions) have to accept an inferior status both politically and socially, and they were prevented from spreading their ideas" (Wittfogel, 1963 : 111-112). Thus, in Oriental civilization despotic sovereign cemented his secular position by having control over ideological system. Wittfogel argues that the 'benevolence' of the state is false because the great works are functionless glorifications of the state or, if functional, benefit only the state (Wittfogel, 1963 : 101-136).

Wittfogel finds in his idea of 'hydraulic society' the basis for constructing a theory of world historical development. The central thesis of his theory is the division of the world into a dynamic 'multicentred' West, where private property and initiative flourish eternally and where the individual is free, and the static, hydraulic, and

despotic 'monocentred' East, where there is no private property and freedom. Thus, independent development of the East into industrialism and capitalism is denied. He also believes quite predictably that Oriental despotic societies ceaselessly repeat themselves. In Wittfogel's words: "Despite any cyclic collapses, Asiatic society, in so far as it was not physically destroyed from outside, could therefore reestablish itself in principle after the worst disaster. The classical type of a society which tenaciously reproduces itself, a stationary society, is created" (Wittfogel, 1981 : 157). He asserts that any upheaval, even socialist revolution in Oriental countries, is the indicator of the restoration of Oriental despotism and Asiatic mode of production (Wittfogel, 1963 : 441-443). So he argues, that Oriental countries can liberate themselves from the 'hydraulic despotism', only with the help of the capitalist West. To quote him: "The external nonhydraulic forces had to penetrate hydraulic society thoroughly in order to accomplish a full diversion transformation" (Wittfogel, 1963 : 423). According to him, colonialism had still not succeeded in transforming the East for bourgeois relations these still did not match the Western pattern . So Western domination is still

needed (see Levada, 1981 : 191).

Several scholars since the publication of Wittfogel's thesis have contested the author's position on Oriental despotism. They have shown that large irrigated works did not characterize all Oriental societies. Further that he deliberately excluded Lombardi and the Netherlands from consideration for these were Occidental societies which exhibited large scale water control (Toynbee, 1981 : 167). Eberhard has contested whether there is any scientific validity in Wittfogel at all (1981 : 181). But the most telling comment on Wittfogel for our purpose here is that by Hindess and Hirst. They write that "the realities of power in the pre-capitalist state are quite different from Wittfogel's conception of a monolithic state machine which 'pulverises' the social structure" (Hindess and Hirst, 1975 : 213). This indeed is where Wittfogel is most culpable. The superstructure (state) plays the role of infrastructure in Oriental societies, but at the same time Marxism does not undergo any alteration. Historical materialism is thus outside the "Orient".

AVINERI'S ACCEPTANCE OF MARX'S ORIENTALISM AND
HIS THESIS ON THE ARAB WORLD

In Shlomo Avineri's works we find the application of orientalism has made an important contribution to Asiatic mode of production and colonialism without any modification and then applying it to explain backwardness with reference to Arab society which he contrasts with the dynamic modernity of Israel. The dichotomy between East and West is brought out clearly in his works. He argues that Israeli presence in or dominance over the Arab world is an inevitable historical necessity, in the same way that Western colonialism in the Orient was, for Marx, inevitable, given the logic of the capitalist mode of production. According to Avineri, "Capitalist society is universalistic in its urges, and it will not be able to change internally unless it encompasses the whole world..." (Avineri, 1968 :3). Thus, for Avineri also, capitalism has changed the history into world history by constantly transforming the whole world. Since socialism will exist in the world after the universalisation of the capitalist mode of production, he argues, "European colonial expansion as a brutal but necessary step towards the victory of socialism.... The horrors of colonialism

are dialectically necessary for the world revolution of the proletariat" (Avineri, 1968a: 12). He also opines if colonial penetration in the Orient is direct, there is greater possibility for transforming it into capitalist society, and, hence, later into socialist society. Avineri writes, "None of this happened in the Arab countries... whether it was called proctorate or mandate, the system ensured the overall paramountcy of the Western power without involving it in direct administration - without therefore, basically affecting the socio-economic infrastructure of Arab society" (Avineri, 1972 : 301).

Before capitalist penetration into the Arab world, the warrior occupied the highest status in the social system. This is because, as Avineri states, religion, that is, Islam, was the dominant structure in the society which gives high importance to military process and military virtues. Thus the infrastructure clearly give precedence to superstructure. Because in Avineri's mind Islam is a religion of conquest and war, therefore the elite looked at craft, trading and commercial occupations with contempt. These occupations were in the hands of Greeks and Jews . Indirect colonialism, instead of destroying the old social

structure of Arab society, reproduced the existing militarism and backwardness of the Arab society by being unduly kind to the military elite. Avineri writes that the western colonial powers "did little to encourage industrial growth in the Arab world, or to promote literacy, or to lay the foundation for a truly western type of constitutional state; but they modernised the Arab armies and thus reinforced the most traditional trait in Arab society" (Avineri, 1972 : 304). When the colonial powers withdrew from the Arab world, the Arab society went back to the same traditional Asiatic stage of development. In terms of structural traits the military societies of the modern Middle East are the direct descendents of the Truks, Seljuks and Mamelukes, who ruled the Arab land from the thirteenth century to the day of colonisation. Thus, the Arab world remained an Asiatic social formation with Islamic ideology as both the infrastructure and superstructure. In recent years, the Arabs have authoritarian and undemocratic governments but equipped with modern weapons and other apparatuses of modern army. Avineri argues that the only exception is Algeria because here there was direct colonial rule. Thus, Arab society (except Algeria) because of its Islamic culture

remains obdurate against the forces of development brought by capitalism. Its transition to socialism is that much more problematic.

For Avineri, the character of Israeli social formation is totally different from the Arab society. Israel is a modern, capitalist and dynamic force in this area. The conflict between Israel and the Arab world, particularly Palestine, is a conflict between two different nationalist social movements where only Israeli nationalism is truly radical, progressive and modern. To quote him : "...the two movements took separate paths, and it is in this divergence that one can locate the Arab nationalism. For while it is possible to maintain that the Jewish nationalist movements succeeded^e in combining a national revolution with a social one, the Arabic movement remained almost exclusively political. An Arab social revolution, indeed, has yet to be undertaken" (Avineri, 1970 : 341). Thus, Zionism, or Israeli nationalism, acquires its special radical and progressive features through the combination of a nationalist and social revolution. By contrast, the traditional militaristic social system of the old Ottoman empire which is not capable of developing internally dynamic and progressive forces provided the basis of Arab nationalism. Nationalism among the Arabs is still led by those leaders who

belong to the traditional elite and are naturally against any radical socio-economic change.

Since the cause of the conflict lies in the totally different natures of Israeli and Palestinian societies no settlement, Avineri argues, can be politically arrived at that would provide a solution to Israeli-Arab conflict. This is because of the domination of religion, tradition, and sentiments (or the superstructure) on the social and economic life (or infrastructure). Like an orientalist he says that this incompatibility cannot be easily resolved unless Israeli colonization brings basic changes in the Palestinian outlook. A lot has been done by the Israel in this respect as Avineri believes. Israeli occupation has already broken the political link between the Palestinian ruled Arabs and their own traditional militaristic rulers. It has also transformed the Arab peasantry in occupied territories into an urban working class. Israel has created the first urban proletariat and progressive Arab bourgeoisie in the occupied areas. It has raised the standards of living of the Palestinian people by using modern science and technology in the field of agriculture, mass communication, housing system and in other public activities. Although, Israeli occupation is coercive, it provides Palestinians the experience of

trade union politics, democracy, urban occupations, urban living, etc. Thus, Israel has acted, in Avineri's words, as the 'inadvertant midwife' of a profound social and economic revolution in Arab Palestine. This will provide a common platform for both the Arab and Israeli working class to share common interests and solve the problem of Israeli-Arab relationship.

ANDERSON ON THE ISLAMIC SOCIAL FORMATION

Though Perry Anderson has revised and reformulated many aspects of Marxism, including the concept of Asiatic societies, he too gives greater weightage to the role of the superstructure in the East. Additionally he too accepts the, by now familiar, position that the East and West have proceeded on entirely different trajectories. There have been negligible, if any, sharing of cultures between the Europeans and the non-Europeans which account for the vast separation between the East and the West today. The emergence of the feudal state from the absolutist state was a typical Western development. Anderson argues that even in European sub-continent Muslim society has not shown any structural trait of European christian society

and has always remained a stranger to European culture. To quote him, "The Balkans constituted a distinct geo-political sub-region, whose whole anterior evolution separated it from the rest of the continent..." (Anderson, 1974 : 361).

Anderson refutes the arguments of those social scientists who assert that feudalism is a worldwide phenomena on the basis of the existence of an identical economic structure every where. He argues if the feudal mode of production can be defined only on the basis of economic structure without taking into account various superstructures, the problem arises in answering the question: why did the feudal mode of production located in the West produce industrial revolution or capitalism? The answer to this question must be sought in the superstructure of Western social formations which accounts for the difference between the West and the East. Anderson writes, "Feudalism typically involves the juridical serfdom and military protection of the peasantry by a social class of nobles, enjoying individual authority and property, and exercising an exclusive monopoly of law and private rights of justice, within a political

framework of fragmented sovereignty and subordinate fiscality, and an aristocratic ideology exalting social life" (Anderson, 1974 : 407). All this is straight Marxism. The superstructural elements that Anderson is referring to in feudal Europe have been seen for Marx's times as emanating from the very basis of the feudal mode of production.

The social formation of Ottoman empire was however, totally different from the Western social formation. Here religion and the state played critical causative roles in the evolution of Ottoman society. The Ottoman society had two important institutions, argues Anderson: (i) the Ruling institution, and (ii) the 'Muslim (or Religious) Institution'. The Ruling Institution constituted the whole bureaucratic and military apparatuses of the empire. The members of the Ruling Institution were war prisoners and exchristian male members. Both Christian male and war prisoners had to undergo rigorous training before being recruited for the Ruling Institution. There was also a native Islamic military stratum of 'sipahi' warriors who held a very different but complementary position within the system. These muslim warriors were allocated by the sultanate landed estates or timars or Zaims from which they were entitled to

draw fixed revenues in exchange of providing military services (Anderson, 1974 : 366-369).

The Muslim Institution comprised the religious, legal and educational apparatuses of the state whose members were orthodox native Muslims headed by the Mufti or Istanbul or Sheikh-ul-Islam whose work was to interpret the sacred law of the Sharia. The Sheikh-ul-Islam could limit the power of the Sultan because he was the official guardian of the Sharia. Anderson writes, "It in no way cancelled the political despotism exercised by the Sultan over his Imperial possession, which fully corresponded to Weber's definition of a patrimonial bureaucracy in which problem of law everywhere tend to become simple questions of administration, bound by customary tradition" (Anderson, 1974 : 370).

Thus, the population of the Ottoman states was divided into two classes. First, the Osmanic ruling class that incorporated members of both the Ruling and Religious Institutions, and second, the royal subject class comprising other members of the state. The distribution is made entirely on the basis of state power and religious authority, and not so much on the basis of the relations of production. Anderson also

writes, "Even at its heights, the level of the Ottoman economy never achieved a degree of advance commensurate with the Ottoman polity" (Anderson, 1974 : 376). For this reason, there was hardly any social prestige of merchants in the Empire. There was no commercial activities in Islamic towns. They were military and imperial centres. Production of any kind was generally stagnant. The population was stable. There was hardly any technical innovation.

For Anderson therefore, Islamic societies were constantly in the process of decline. This is reminiscent of earlier Orientalists we had discussed who believed that the emergence of Oriental society is also the moment of its decline and stagnation. Anderson writes, "Once territorial expansion ceased, however, a slow involution of its whole enormous structure was inevitable (Anderson, 1974 : 378).

The symptom of decomposition of the despotic state was revealed firstly by the dis-integration of the janissary corps and devshirme stratum. After that disintegration occurred in the timar system. These changes in structures did not bring about feudalism or any structural transformation in the Ottoman despotic system. As Anderson writes, "The

protracted decomposition of the Osmanli despotism, however, did not generate any ultimate feudalism. The imperial title to all secular land within the empire was not abandoned.... The liquefaction of the old social and political order did not lead to the emergence of any cogent new one" (Anderson, 1974 : 387-388).

In keeping with this line of thinking Anderson argues like many others before him that a major structural change toward development in the Ottoman despotic state is caused by a Western event. To quote him, "The birth of a new form of state had to wait until the diplomatic conservation of the relics of the old ended with the international conflict of the First World War, which finally released the Osmanli realm from its misery" (Anderson, 1974 : 390). The West to the rescue, yet again!

In the previous pages, we took Wittfogel, Avineri and Anderson to demonstrate how certain orientalist ideas have remained in the works of some of the most influential modern Western Marxists. Not always does Orientalism exhibit itself in a gross form in these authors. Some subtle conceptual transformations have also occurred. Infact very often we find with increasing clarity

the view that superstructure can be infrastructure in these non-Western societies. While Weberians and functionalists have held such an opinion consistently, it is rather perplexing that Marxists should do the same without making any basic reformulation of Marxism. Obviously, Marxism applies only in the West over whose interpretation the Marxists would differ widely with the non-Marxists, but on the Orient there are great, almost overwhelming, areas of agreement. Such areas of concordance between Godelier and Dumont, for instance, have been mentioned by Gupta earlier (see Gupta, 1981:2093-2104) but it should be added that for a total understanding of this phenomenon it is useful to see it is in the context of orientalist assumptions. These orientalist assumptions bring together Marxist and non-Marxist as long as the universe of study is the Orient and or the non-Western world.

It would not be correct to leave this chapter at this stage without touching briefly upon some Marxist critiques of Orientalist Marxist positions. The major rubric under which this will be considered

will be the question of internal development in Oriental societies. Many Marxists have recently also argued that the dialectic of historical materialism applies to the Orient as well. In fact the Orient could have also developed to a feudal stage out of its internal dynamism.

THE VIABILITY OF INTERNAL DIALECTICS IN THE ORIENT :
THE FEASIBILITY OF FEUDALISM IN INDIA AND CHINA

Tokei (1981) and Godelier (1981) have shown through their studies on the Asiatic mode of production that there was a strong possibility that the Asiatic mode may not have been an eternally stagnant stage in history. Tokei believes that the Asiatic mode of production is a transitional form (Tokei, 1981 : 263) and that the Asiatic mode is basically constituted of economic classes (Tokei, 1981 : 258). Godelier too highlights this aspect but he perhaps goes further than Tokei for he allows for a movement from Asiatic mode of production to feudalism in non-Western societies. (Godelier, 1981 : 266). For Tokei this trajectory is not fully entertained for countries in the Orient.

Neither the Asiatic mode of production nor Oriental despotism were accepted without criticism by non-Western Marxists. Many of these scholars

bring out instead the presence of feudalism in the Orient and undermining the protracted existence of Asiatic mode of production which is characterised by the absence of private property in land. Here we shall concentrate specifically on the case of India and China.

FEUDALISM IN THE ORIENT

(a) The Case of India;

Various historical studies have shown that there was feudalism in India and that this feudalism was not different from European feudalism in its important elements. The Indian society is, in fact, not stagnant but mobile or dynamic. D.D. Kosambi, the eminent Marxist historian, detailed the process by which the Janapadas were able to convert surplus into private property in the Mauryan period (Kosambi, 1975 :225). Secondly as Habib, Kosambi and Ghosal also pointed out that there was a forceful transformation of Shudras from servants to peasants (Habib, 1965:33; Kosambi, 1975 :301; Ghosal, 1972 : 194).

These new developments, as Gupta writes, helped the growth of village based feudal economy "which took on a more pronounced form during the Gupta (400-500 A.D.) and the Harsha (700 A.D) empires and continued down through the Medieval age under

different local economic formations (Gupta, 1980: 260) between that the most important development after the Maruyan period is the practice of land grants made mainly to Brahmin and of officers of the state (Sharma, 1965 : 1-2,7). Habib writes that in the Kamasutra (400-500 A.D.) the village headman is represented as "exacting unpaid labour from peasant woman and compelling them, among other things, to till his granaries and work on his own fields. The officials thus appear as having land of their own and enjoying semi-feudal rights over the peasantry (Habib, 1965 : 35)

The crystallization of these new developments, as Sharma writes, started occurring from the seventh century (Sharma 1965 : 52-60). Later Yadav also noted that the feudal elites such as the Samantas, petty village chiefs, thakurs, etc., started to establish more control over the landed property (Yadav, 1978 : 45). This brought about, as Chattopadhyay argued, the structured inequality in the entire territory of the Kingdom (Chattopadhyay, 1976 : 64-69). Habib writes :

Here the territory was parcelled by the ruler after retaining his own share among his kinsmen and clan chiefs. Each of the latter then set about dividing his territory among his own kinsmen and clan chiefs. Each of latter then set about dividing his territory

among his own clansmen while retaining his own share, until by this process every village was assigned to a particular man in return for a supply of troopers when needed by the assignor... The most common titles of the patentrates (i.e. the new landed aristocracies) are samanta, ranaka, rauta, thakkurra and rajputra (Habib, 1965: 41-42).

Gopal also asserts that in this period the distribution of land among royal kinsmen and higher officials was a frequent widespread phenomenon (Gopal, 1963-64: 75-103). Chattopadhyay cites the evidence of the Harsha inscriptions of 973 A.D. at Jaipur for such distribution of land (Chattopadhyay, 1976 : 71). **Gupta** writes that never before there was so clear localization of exploitation and direct control over the peasants and craftsman by local chiefs, his intermediaries and clansmen (Gupta, 1980 : 262). Sharma categorically states : "The main characteristics of European feudalism, the self-sufficient economy, buttressed by lack of commercial intercourse and the rise of intermediaries leading to the subservience of the peasants prevailed in India...(and) the possessing class appropriated the surplus produced by the peasants by exercising superior rights over land and powers (Sharma, 1965 : 272).

During the Muslim period, 'even the regeneration of royal bureaucracies, as Singh observes, did not bring about the Asiatic mode of production in place of feudalism

(Singh, 1973 : 200). Alavi also concurred that the Mughal rulers had no ownership in all landed property (Alavi, 1975: 186). Habib, Siddiqui and Hasan also argue that in the Muslim period there was no basic change in the already existing village structure (Habib, 1965 : 54-55; 1971; 14-15; Siddiqui, 1970 : 17-40 and Hasan, 1963 : 118).

(b) The Case of China:

Chinese historians have also refuted the conceptualization of Chinese society in the orientalist framework. They have shown that there was feudalism in China, although there is disagreement on the periodizing of the feudal mode of production.

The view that the early Zhou period (1122-255 B.C.) was characterized by feudalism was widely held among Chinese historians in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The most prominent among them is Tao Xisheng. Dirlik writes that for Tao, Zhou society has displayed all the basic characteristic elements of a feudal society (Dirlik, 1985 : 200-203). First, there was self-sufficient manorial organisation of production. The manor was made up of farm land, pastures and hunting grounds surrounding the fortress of the lord. The Lord divided part of the land among the serfs. The rest was public land. The serf had to pay rent to the lord in the form of fraction of the produce, and

to provide wine or poultry and other articles of consumption occasionally. There was existence of the practice of forced labour. Second, the division of the land among landholders was according to their political rank and military power. In principle, Zhou Kings had ownership in all landed property and the lords held their land in trust as fiefs. Third, there was a class of free peasants and landholders who did not pay rent to the lords but provided military services. Fourth, there was periodic enforcement of the rules of hierarchicel system. Thus, Tao was emphasising among other things the concentration of political and economic power in the same class.

Tao argued that due to the sophistication of land irrigation and the emergence of new agrarian techniques, production increased that contributed to the emergence of commercialised economy and the disintegration of the feudal natural economy by the middle of the Zhou period (around 500 B.C.). Land lost its feature as a privilege of political power and it was converted into a market commodity. The result was the emergence of a new class who challenged the power of the Zhou nobility. Bureaucratic power

went in the hands of bureaucrats of the centralised Chinese state. Landlords and merchants had economic power. But, feudal ideology still persisted in this social formation.

There is another group of historians who have assigned to feudalism a much larger place in Chinese history. They also held that China had entered the feudal stage in early Zhou period, but, unlike, Tao, they argue that it remained in this stage throughout the imperial period (see Dirlik 1985 : 203). The most important representatives of this group is Zhu Peiwo.

Zhu accepts that commercial capital has existed in traditional Chinese society and has even penetrated the village economy but minimises its disintegrative power. Contrary to Tao, he argues that commercial capital in any feudal society serve the feudal mode of production and intensify feudal exploitation. Zhu also argues that changes in the pattern of land ownership and political superstructure in late Zhou period has brought about transformation in the feudal social formation since neither of these result in change in the mode of production and exploitation. Thus, he says that Chinese society remained in the feudal stage from around 1000 B.C. to the early twentieth century.

The Third group of historians argue that feudalism existed in China from the late third century B.C. into the early twentieth century. Thus, for them, early Zhou period was not the period of feudalism. They depict early Zhou society as a slave society. Guo Moruo is one of the most important representative of this view. Guo (1930) writes, "Zhou society has historically been regarded as a feudal system but this view does not accord with the order of social development. The fall of gens society must be followed by the stage of the slave society - which is also when the stage emerges - before society can proceed to feudalism" (quoted from Dirlik 1985 : 206). Guo argues that in the imperial period which has been characterized by feudalism, "The producers are no longer slaves but liberated peasants and artisans. The important means of production in agriculture is the formally divided land which is now under the ownership of an exploitative class of landlords. Crafts and trade are free of official control and organized according to guild enterprises. The state that is founded upon these classes subsists on the taxes paid by landlords, craftsmen and merchants" (quoted from Dirlik, 1985 : 206).

In contemporary discussion on feudalism in Chinese society, most of the Chinese historians assign to feudalism a three thousand year history in China and, hence, endorse the thesis of Tao. Fu Zhufu's works are the best representative of this view (see Dirlik, 1985 : 209). Fu argues that Chinese feudal history does not reveal a difference from a universalized European model, rather it becomes a case from which to draw conclusions of universal relevance concerning feudal society in general. The Chinese feudal mode of production exhibited all the characteristics of European feudal system (Fu, 1980, Vol.1, 64-84). With the rise in commerce in the latter part of Zhou period what emerged in China was a 'landlord' system that lasted for two thousand years and did not differ in quality, as Fu writes, from the 'noble lord' systems of the early Zhou society (Fu, 1980, Vol.1 : 243). To quote him "...the change was not one of the mode of production, but merely a change of the pattern of organization and of the form of exploitation. The mode of production remained feudal" (Fu, 1981 : 10). However, Fu describes the changes of late Zhou period as 'revolutionary' that brought about qualitative changes in the society. During this period land became 'a kind of interest-bearing capital' (Fu, 1980, Vol.1

198). Fu writes that wage labour emerged in the late Zhou period. With the T'ang Dynasty, elements of capitalist mode of production began to appear with rise of regional specialization, large-scale production of commodities, urbanization, merchants 'and artisan' guilds and long rang, including international, trade. By the Song Dynasty (A.D. 960-1875) China became a totally commercialized society. Even agricultural forms assumed the form of commodities (Fu, 1980. ~~Vol 2~~ : 669-708).

Regardless of the various periodization of feudalism, the above cited works made it clear that China was never a stagnant Asiatic social formation. Great changes and transformations took place in the Chinese social order. There was always dynamism, progress and evolutionary development in China. It is interesting to note how these scholars detail the development of land as "interest bearing capital" and the emergence of the labouring classes in early Chinese history.

CONCLUSION ; INFRASTRUCTURE AS SUPERSTRUCTURE IN ORIENTALIST MARXISM

The last section reviewing the possibilities for the existence of feudalism in India and China

were primarily to demonstrate that there were enough grounds in these countries which would warrant the use of historical materialism to understand Oriental societies. In all such cases, infrastructure and superstructure are clearly distinguished by all the different scholars. We do not have here the determining effect of superstructural aspects like the state or religion or kinship (as in Wittfogel, Anderson, Avineri or Godelier) holding back a society in perpetuity. Instead the history of these Societies is seen as the history of classes, the contradictions within them, and more importantly the changes that have occurred consequently in those societies. True the pace of change may have been slow and it may have been different, but these societies were not stagnant.

Though we have only taken Wittfogel, Avineri and Anderson for our quick review of orientalist Marxists but they are not alone. Many other scholars like Tokei and Godelier can also be included in this rank. Though Tokei believes that the Asiatic mode of production is transitional it is so only for the West. In the East the Asiatic Mode of production stays on to change forever the course of the Occident from the Orient. (Tokei, 1981).

He too felt that the development and universalisation of the capitalist mode of production was the only way to inject changes in these societies. He asserts: "It logically follows that only the development of capitalism and thereupon socialist development can integrate these ambivalent and semi-barbarian civilizations within the universal evolution of mankind" (Tokei, 1981 : 263).

Godelier differed from Tokei in many ways, ^{the} He went to/extent of saying that the Asiatic mode of production could even develop to some kind of feudalism (Godelier, 1981). Interestingly, however, he never really paid close attention to the existence of classes in non-Western societies. Whether it be the Incas or the Hindus it was religion or kinship or caste that played an autonomous role and was in fact both infrastructure and superstructure (Godelier, 1972: IX, X and 95; 1977, chapter-II). It was because of this that he appreciatively quoted Dumont with regard to India (see Gupta, 1981 : 2093-2104). The dialectic is again suspended for the East.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters an attempt has been made to show that Marxists have also followed an orientalist 'problematic' both in theory and in practice. Now, it can no longer be asserted that orientalism has only infected non-marxist discourse and Marxist scholarship has transcended this limitation. This tradition goes back to Marx and Engels. One interesting feature of this kind of scholarship is that Marxist theory which is otherwise so avidly projected, is suspended by these same authors when it comes to viewing the Orient. In this sense their inconsistency is very glaring. Non-Marxists and functionalists have been theoretically more consistent. Not surprisingly these orientalist Marxist are in agreement with the non-Marxist on issues relating to the non-Western world.

In a nutshell, orientalist Marxism has exhibited the following characteristics. There always exists in orientalist Marxism (i) a dichotomous model of the 'Occident' and the 'Orient'. The crucial element of this dichotomy is that the Occident is homogenously and uniformly progressive and dynamic while the Orient is consistently static and begins its decline at the moment of its parturition. Thus, the rise of the Orient is also the genesis of its

downfall. For example, the Occident has reached the stage of capitalism by passing through the various stages of primitive communism, slavery, and feudalism, whereas the Orient has moved only from primitive communism to the Asiatic phase.

(ii) Secondly, orientalist Marxism provides a list of causes which explain the stagnation of the Orient. The list includes the absence of almost all those elements that characterize Occidental society, such as private property, rainfall-~~agriculture~~ agriculture, progressive ideological structures, classes based on economic relation, dynamic political structure, city as commercial centres etc. Instead emphasis is placed on the presence of general slavery, despotic government, hydraulic agriculture, non-progressive ideological structures, such as caste, Hinduism, Islam etc., state ownership in land, and arbitrary laws. Due to these features of the Oriental society the whole mass of the population is reduced to an abject dependence on the free will of the ruler or despot. The despot has power over all institutions. So, there is no autonomous organization or institution. No progressive ideological structure fosters attitudes of resignation acceptance and fatalism. Furthermore, this prompts

the climaxing of the orientalist Marxists' argument that because of the totally distinct nature of the Oriental social formation, where despotism and stagnation reign supreme, super-structural elements like caste, religion, state, etc. act as infrastructure.

(iii) Thirdly, orientalist Marxism also asserts that the fate of the Orient is totally dependent on the 'Occident'. Since Oriental society is static it is not capable of transforming itself, capitalism, whose universalisation is necessary for the emergence of socialism, can only be brought about in this society through external forces, that is, colonialism. Thus, orientalist Marxists see colonialism as an inevitable and historically necessary progressive force. The Orient is also dependent on the Occident for its socialist revolution because there cannot be a socialist revolution in the Orient unless and until the Occidental society has been transformed into a socialist one first. Even the working masses in the Orient, mainly the peasants cannot lead themselves and so they should be led by the Western proletariat.

In the concluding section of this chapter, we shall take up for a brief examination of Orientalist Marxist theme that colonialism has regenerated the Orient and instilled in it a dynamic which would logically lead to the universalization of the capitalist mode of production.

COLONIALISM AS NOT A REGENERATIVE FORCE

Various studies have also shown that Western capitalism through the process of colonialism has not brought about the kind of economic change in the Oriental societies that has been envisaged by several orientalist Marxists. These Marxists thought that colonialism would destroy the existing pre-capitalist mode of production and bring about capitalist development of the Western type in the Orient. As we mentioned earlier many have also emphasised, from Marx to Avineri, that the more direct the colonialism the more effective will it be in this matter.

Contrary to this view, Bipan Chandra argues that British rule failed to generate economic growth in India along true capitalist lines. To quote him: "The economic policies of the British

raj in all fields-finance, tariffs, transport, trade, foreign capital, export of capital or the 'drain', currency, education, technology, heavy industries, banking, agriculture - were geared to the preservation of the colonial economy" (Chandra, 1968 : 73-74). He goes on to say: "The traditional anti-imperialist interpretation will be modified - as it deserves to be - by further study. But... its basic view that British rule, by making India a colonial economy, was responsible for India's economic backwardness is not likely to be modified at all" (Chandra, 1968 : 75).

We might quickly refer in this connection to Bryan Turner's critique of Shlomo Avineri's views (mentioned earlier in Chapter IV) that Israeli presence is the only hope for regeneration of Arab societies. Turner in contrast asserts that Israeli colonialism has not brought about any fundamental change in traditional Palestinian class structure. He opines that after along period of colonisation the peasantry is still "the dominant section within the Palestinian class structure.... The possibility of progressive capitalist development under such social conditions is, needless to say, very limited" (Turner, 1984 : 128). At another place he writes:

"the traditional petty bourgeoisie (merchants, shopkeepers and artisans) has declined under the impact of Israeli capital and the loss of the tourist trade" (Turner, 1978 : 31). They have lost confidence in the prospects for long term development. Referring to the views of Ryan (1974), Turner goes on to argue, "By contrast, the starvation of Arab investment in industrial capital, competition from Israeli goods, and the favourable terms for Israeli capitalists have curtailed the development of an Arab industrial capitalist class" (Turner, 1978 : 31). Israeli domination over Palestine has brought about misery for Palestinians by making them jobless. To quote Turner again, "the number of employers and semi-employed on the West Bank and Gaza declined from 43,000 in 1969 to 30,000 in 1973" (Turner, 1978 : 31). In this colonial economy the Arab workers exist as an unskilled seasonal and migrant labour force.

Turner's arguments are also supported by Aswad. He is also of the view that Israeli penetration into Palestine has not changed the basic structure of the society. According to Aswad,

Over 50 per cent of the Israeli Arabs are still rural-based, as opposed to 12 per cent of Israeli Jews. Many may have wage-labour jobs in the city but return to their homes in the villages. Thus, in Israel there remains a small middle peasantry with many of its members commuting to urban jobs, but a substantial rural population which has been isolated from its elites, yet it has not completely merged into Israeli society" (Aswad, 1970 : 22).

The findings of dependency theorists or circulationists also contradict the assertions of orientalist Marxists. They argue that European colonialism has not brought about the capitalist system in the Orient which is capable of producing economic development. This is because of its dependent character. In fact, this type of capitalist mode of production has produced the structures of underdevelopment in colonial or semi-colonial countries. According to Griffin : "Underdeveloped countries as we observe today are a product of historical forces, especially those released by European expansion and world ascendancy... Europe did not 'discover' the underdeveloped countries : on the contrary, she created them" (Griffin, 1968 : 38).

Baran (1973) stretches this argument further when he says that this unequal relationship between the Occident and the Orient is always maintained even after

post-colonial state. This is done through trade, flows of surplus and political-military influence. Trade serves to provide cheap raw materials and primary products to the West, while the industrial development in the Orient is blocked by the competition of manufactured products imported from the West. The Oriental underdeveloped countries have no resources of development because of the surplus flows, in the form of profits and dividends, into the Western societies.

Like Baran, A.G. Frank also opines that the incorporation of the Oriental countries into the world capitalist system, which is created through the process of colonization, leads to development in the West and the 'development of underdevelopment' in the East. To quote him, "I believe, with Paul Baran that it is capitalism, both world and national, which produced underdevelopment in the past and which still generates underdevelopment in the present (Frank, 1969: XI). Franks' detailing of the chain of relations between the metropolitan and the satellite countries is his main contribution in this field. He writes, while analysing the economic level of Chilean social formation:

The monopoly capitalist structure and the surplus expropriation/appropriation contradiction run through the entire Chilean economy, past and present. Indeed it is the exploitative relations which in chain like fashion extends the capitalist link between the capitalist world and national metropolies to the regional centres (part of whose surplus they appropriate) was from these to local centres and so on to large landholders or merchants who expropriate surplus from small peasants or tenants, and sometimes even from these latter to landless labourers exploited by them in turn. At each step along the way the relatively few capitalists above exercise monopoly power over the many below, expropriating some or all of their economic surplus, and to the extent they are not expropriated in turn by the still fewer above, appropriating it for their own use. Thus, at each points, the international, national and local capitalist system generates economic development for the few and underdevelopment for the many (Frank, 1969 : 7-8).

Frank makes similar statements about Brazil (Frank, 1969 :: 146-148). Later development of this thesis can be found in Wallerstein and Amin.

Thus the writings of such scholars as Chandra, Turner, Paul Baran, Frank and others clearly show that colonial capitalist system has not brought the universalisation of the capitalist tempo into Oriental societies. The orientalist belief that through colonialism the Oriental world would gradually mirror European societies has convincingly been

demolished. Instead we find that many ex-colonial nations are peculiarly trapped as unequal partners in the international capitalist system, which in turn inhibits a thorough going capitalist transformation within. The backwardness of the Orient today is then not so much because of its pre-colonial Asiatic past as it is because of the economic and political effects of colonialism.

A FINAL WORD

One last word on this subject before we close. It is not our intention to give the impression that the Oriental world has had the same history as the Occident, or that it was equally capitalistic, and so forth. Nor are the Orientalists who have in each specific case examined the relative slowness of growth of certain Oriental societies. Instead Orientalists are those who retrospectively dichotomise the world on the basis of Europe's development today. Our position in this dissertation has been that Marx and many Marx^xists after him who insist otherwise on historical specificity of social investigation and political internationalism have also tended to (i) homogenize the non-European world; (ii) to view the Orient as stagnant and outside history, and thus, in essence, outside the scope of historical materialism;

(iii) consequently, the emphasis has been to conflate cultural and superstructural factors with infra-structural factors with respect to the Orient. Such a conflation which would be anathematized by Marxists otherwise, should the non-Oriental world be in consideration, is accepted calmly in the non-European context. It is this permanent methodological dichotomy which, in our opinion, is the fount of orientalism, and it affects alike whoever drinks deep from it. This is one important reason why these same orientalist Marxists are in significant agreement with the non-Marxists when it comes to studying the non-European world.

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