

**Marxist Leninist Programme
of Democracy with Equity and
Sustainability**

Rahul Banerjee

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PRINTER & PUBLISHER

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by Rahul Banerjee

is published by Suman Bhadra of PRATYAYA in 2024

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Cover Design: Suman Bhadra

Pageset: in house of PRATYAYA

ISBN: 978-93-93894-16-8

Printed at Ficus, Kolkata



24/1B, Creek Row, Kolkata - 700014

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Preface

Democracy may be defined as a form of governance in which decision making is vested in the people and done by them either directly in the case of small institutions with only a few members or indirectly through a system of representation involving periodically held free and fair elections with or without the right of recall.

Direct democracy in small communities can be implemented in isolation but it is difficult to do so within an overarching centralised state system. Actualising indirect democracy, which becomes necessary in case of large institutions, is an even more difficult proposition. Especially so in the case of nation states which have elaborate and hierarchical armed forces, police, judiciary and bureaucracy that run the daily affairs. History has shown that whether in the capitalist or the socialist states, the common people have not been able to participate in decision making, which has been monopolised by a powerful minority and this continues to be the case. Consequently, the democracy that does exist at present is deeply flawed with most people left out of any real decision making with regard to governance beyond casting their votes in elections which may or may not be free and fair.

However, given the deep challenges that the human race faces both in terms of the increasing marginalisation of a huge majority of people from the use of resources and the increasing

devastation of nature that threatens the future production of resources, which can lead to yet another mass extinction like the five known ones that have already occurred earlier on earth, it is imperative that true democracy with real decision making being done by the people, instead of by a chosen few, is actualised, ensuring equity and sustainability of resource use.

Equity here means a fair distribution and control of resources and opportunities among the people to make possible a dignified existence for all. This recognises the intersectionality of oppressions across class, caste, ethnic, racial and gender divides and strives at removing them all. Sustainability here means the use of natural resources in such a way that they are not depleted or polluted resulting in irreversible damage to the ecosystem. Thus, this analysis, while staying within the Marxist framework, goes beyond class to encompass other kinds of oppressions and expands the sphere of enquiry to include nature of which human society is a miniscule part.

This pamphlet attempts to chart out a prescription for democracy within the Marxist-Leninist framework because this framework talks of democracy in the sphere of resource ownership and economic management as being the most important goal of political democracy. Even though, liberal democracy too talks of equity, nevertheless by not only recognising the right to private property but also not providing for any limiting control on its accumulation by individual citizens, it severely limits the possibilities of equity and political democracy. It is argued here with facts that the seminal tenets of the Marxist-Leninist framework, as set out in various documents by Lenin, were distorted in their implementation in post-revolutionary societies and so its full potential could not be realised in these states, eventually resulting in a restoration of capitalism under them.

In what follows Lenin's conception of democracy is first discussed in detail through an analysis of important writings of

his on this subject. The special situation that prevailed in Russia just after the Russian Revolution of October 1917 for the first five years is then critically analysed. Then, the distortion of the Marxist-Leninist tradition of democracy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) after the death of Lenin is detailed, followed by the distortions to this in China post the revolution there. Finally, the current situation prevailing globally and in India is detailed and critically analysed followed by the formulation of a programme of real democracy that can be implemented for ensuring equity and sustainability in future.

This pamphlet is the product of a joint review and exposition exercise conducted by a group of activists who are striving to actualise grassroots democracy in opposition to the presently dominant global, formally democratic but in practice dictatorial, capitalist system.

Rahul Banerjee

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Chapter 1

The Marxist-Leninist Conception of Democracy

The Marxist-Leninist framework of democracy is laid out in detail by Lenin in his tract “State and Revolution” written in August 1917 just prior to the October Revolution in Russia and published after it in 1918.

He begins his analysis with the concept of the state which is a large institution with repressive organs like the armed forces, police, judiciary and the bureaucracy and quotes Engels regarding its nature –

The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it ‘the reality of the ethical idea’, ‘the image and reality of reason’, as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of ‘order’; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state [1].

He then stresses the fact himself, clearly mentioned above by Engels, that the state is an institution that has arisen from the irreconcilability of class antagonisms and it has a power that is used by the ruling capitalist class to oppress the working class. He criticises the liberal democratic formulation that the state is a neutral body that reconciles the antagonism between various citizens. He writes,

According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of “order”, which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, however, order means the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to alleviate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors. For instance, when, after the (February) revolution of 1917, the question of the significance and role of the state arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action, and, moreover, action on a mass scale, all the Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks descended at once to the petty-bourgeois theory that the “state” “reconciles” classes. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this petty-bourgeois and philistine “reconciliation” theory. That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which cannot be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it) is something the petty bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand [2].

Lenin further quotes Engels about the nature of the state over the ages and especially in modern times with the rise of capitalism –

Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class....The ancient and feudal states were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs; likewise, the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage-labor by capital.....in a democratic republic wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely, first, by means of the “direct corruption of officials”; secondly, by means of an “alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange.” [3]

This is then further elucidated by Lenin in the context of imperialism and finance capitalism and the hold that the bourgeois state has on the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who are in coalition with the conservatives as follows,

At present, imperialism and the domination of the banks have “developed” into an exceptional art of both these methods of upholding and giving effect to the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all descriptions. Since, for instance, in the very first months of the Russian democratic republic, one might say during the honeymoon of the “socialist” Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks joined in wedlock to the bourgeoisie, in the coalition government. Mr. Palchinsky obstructed every measure intended for curbing the capitalists and their marauding practices, their plundering of the state by means of war contracts; and since later on Mr. Palchinsky, upon resigning from the Cabinet (and being, of course, replaced

by another quite similar Palchinsky), was “rewarded” by the capitalists with a lucrative job with a salary of 120,000 rubles per annum — what would you call that? Direct or indirect bribery? An alliance of the government and the syndicates, or “merely” friendly relations? What role do the Chernovs, Tseretelis, Avksentyevs and Skobelevs play? Are they the “direct” or only the indirect allies of the millionaire treasury-looters? Another reason why the omnipotence of “wealth” is more certain in a democratic republic is that it does not depend on defects in the political machinery or on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell (through the Palchinskys, Chernovs, Tseretelis and Co.), it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it. [4]

Lenin then quotes Marx and Engels from the Communist Manifesto,

The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class **to win the battle of democracy** (present author’s emphasis)... then the proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible. [5]

Lenin goes on to write,

The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class. What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally, only

the exploiting class, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The working people need the state only to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can direct this suppression, can carry it out. For the proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary, the only class that can unite all the working and exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely removing it. The exploiting classes need political rule to maintain exploitation, i.e., in the selfish interests of an insignificant minority against the vast majority of all people. The exploited classes need political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitation, i.e., in the interests of the vast majority of the people, and against the insignificant minority consisting of the modern slave-owners — the landowners and capitalists.... The proletariat needs state power, a centralized organization of force, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population — the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians — in the work of organizing a socialist economy.[6]

Lenin, thus makes it clear following Marx and Engels that the working class too must have a state in the aftermath of the revolution with which to abolish exploitation by the capitalists. What will be the structure of this working class state and how will it operate? This is an important question because unlike the bourgeois state that facilitates exploitation, the working class state must do the opposite, abolish it. Before addressing this question, Lenin details the corrupt nature of the bourgeois state with the example of the one that came to power in Russia in February 1917,

Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are

connected with these institutions by thousands of threads. Every worker's experience illustrates this connection in an extremely graphic and impressive manner. From its own bitter experience, the working class learns to recognize this connection... The bureaucracy and the standing army are a "parasite" on the body of bourgeois society--a parasite created by the internal antagonisms which rend that society, but a parasite which "chokes" all its vital pores.... [7]

The development, perfection, and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus proceeded during all the numerous bourgeois revolutions which Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism. In particular, it is the petty bourgeoisie who are attracted to the side of the big bourgeoisie and are largely subordinated to them through this apparatus, which provides the upper sections of the peasants, small artisans, tradesmen, and the like with comparatively comfortable, quiet, and respectable jobs raising the holders above the people.[8]

Consider what happened in Russia during the six months following February 27, 1917. The official posts which formerly were given by preference to the Black Hundreds have now become the spoils of the Cadets, Mensheviks, and Social-Revolutionaries. Nobody has really thought of introducing any serious reforms. Every effort has been made to put them off "until the Constituent Assembly meets", and to steadily put off its convocation until after the war! But there has been no delay, no waiting for the Constituent Assembly, in the matter of dividing the spoils of getting the lucrative jobs of ministers, deputy ministers, governors-general, etc., etc.! The game of combinations that has been played in forming the government has been, in essence, only an expression of this division and

redivision of the “spoils”, which has been going on above and below, throughout the country, in every department of central and local government. [9]

The six months between February 27 and August 27, 1917, can be summed up, objectively summed up beyond all dispute, as follows: reforms shelved, distribution of official jobs accomplished and “mistakes” in the distribution corrected by a few redistributions. But the more the bureaucratic apparatus is “redistributed” among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties (among the Cadets, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the case of Russia), the more keenly aware the oppressed classes, and the proletariat at their head, become of their irreconcilable hostility to the whole of bourgeois society. Hence the need for all bourgeois parties, even for the most democratic and “revolutionary-democratic” among them, to intensify repressive measures against the revolutionary proletariat, to strengthen the apparatus of coercion, i.e., the state machinery.[10]

Further, the essence of Marx’s theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire intervening historical period which separates capitalism from “classless society”, from communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat.[11]

It should be noted that the last line in the above quotation has been misused in later Marxist texts (See Chapter 5 footnote 4 below) to mean that the proletarian state can even be less democratic and more authoritarian than the bourgeois democratic republic. This is a falsification of Leninism given all the quotations on the topic of democracy as lectured by Lenin and presented throughout this chapter by us. We only sum up the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin to state that given the fate of USSR any regression of democracy to a level below the bourgeois democratic threshold will certainly stop the process of further transition to a class less society and lay the foundation for a resumption of capitalism.

The important question, therefore, is how can the dictatorship of the proletariat be more and more democratic in allowing the working class to make the decisions that run the state apparatus rather than follow the decisions made by a chosen few as is the case under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Especially since the intervening period between the seizure of state power and the achievement of a stateless communist society is likely to be a very long one. To answer this Lenin turns to the practice of the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871. He begins by quoting from Marx's analysis of this uprising in the 1872 edition of the "Communist Manifesto" and "The Civil War in France" –

The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes... [12] The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people... The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class.... The police, which until then had been the

instrument of the Government, was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen's wages. The privileges and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.... [13]

Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the instruments of physical force of the old government, the Commune proceeded at once to break the instrument of spiritual suppression, the power of the priests.... The judicial functionaries lost that sham independence... they were thenceforward to be elective, responsible, and revocable.... The Commune made that catchword of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality by abolishing the two greatest sources of expenditure – the army and the officialdom.[14]

The Commune, was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time.... Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business. [15]

In a brief sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states explicitly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest village.... The communes were to elect the "National Delegation" in Paris.... The few but important functions which would still remain for a central

government were not to be suppressed, as had been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials.... National unity was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, organized by the communal constitution; it was to become a reality by the destruction of state power which posed as the embodiment of that unity yet wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation, on whose body it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society. [16]

Lenin then goes on to write about the nature of the commune—

The Commune, therefore, appears to have replaced the smashed state machine “only” by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of “quantity being transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper. It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush their resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. The organ of suppression, however, is here the majority of the population, and not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom, and wage slavery. And since the majority of people itself

suppresses its oppressors, a ‘special force’ for suppression is no longer necessary! In this sense, the state begins to wither away. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfil all these functions, and the more the functions of state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power.

In this connection, the following measures of the Commune, emphasized by Marx, are particularly noteworthy:

The abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges to officials,

The reduction of the remuneration of all servants of the state to the level of “workmen’s wages”.

This shows more clearly than anything else the turn from bourgeois to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to that of the oppressed classes, from the state as a “special force” for the suppression of a particular class to the suppression of the oppressors by the general force of the majority of the people--the workers and the peasants. [17]

A similar quotation showing the relation between the quantity of democracy and its quality is –

Democracy is a form of the state, it represents, on the one hand, the organized, systematic use of force against persons; but, on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state. This, in turn, results in the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the class that wages a revolutionary struggle against capitalism-

-the proletariat, and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy and to substitute for them a more democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population. Here “quantity turns into quality”: such a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganization. If really all take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold. The development of capitalism, in turn, creates the preconditions that enable really “all” to take part in the administration of the state. Some of these preconditions are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the “training and disciplining” of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.”[18]

These two last quotations show that for Lenin the difference between bourgeois and proletarian democracy is a qualitative one only, the latter being much more than the former and this is all the more important in today’s context. For example, if bourgeois democracy is augmented by the right to recall of elected representatives then it will be extremely difficult to maintain the stability of Palchinskys, Tseretellis and Tchernovs mentioned earlier and this stability is essential for maintaining capitalist production relations. We continue with a few more pronouncements of Lenin along with our appropriate observations -

The Commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate

into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labor between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere “election” cry for catching workers’ votes. [19]

Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy--this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat. [20]

In this connection Lenin’s idea that all should take part in the administration is a necessary condition for the remnants of the smashed bureaucracy to retreat is easier to achieve in countries like China today.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-

bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.[21]

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people--this is the change democracy undergoes during the transition from capitalism to communism. Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), only then “the state... ceases to exist”, and “it becomes possible to speak of freedom”. Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realized, a democracy without any exceptions whatever....Freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities, and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state. [22]

This is the ideal situation of classless and stateless democracy that is the goal of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary thought and action that remains relevant even today. But as we shall see it is very difficult to achieve.

Here it would be relevant to detail the history of the Russian

Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) in the early years of the twentieth century as it has a bearing on the later political developments leading up to the two revolutions of 1917. The Second Congress of the RSDLP held in 1903 agreed on the strategy for the revolution in Russia to establish Socialism. The party agreed that with the yoke of feudalism thrown off, a capitalistic system should be built; *i.e.* society needed to progress in stages from feudalism to capitalism to socialism to communism; one stage needed to be completed before the next was possible.

In Russia, where capitalism has already become the dominant mode of production, there are still very many survivals from the old precapitalist order, which was based on the enslavement of the working masses by the landlords, the state or the sovereign. Hindering economic progress to a very considerable extent, these survivals inhibit an all-round development of the class struggle of the proletariat, and contribute to the maintenance and consolidation of the most barbarous forms of exploitation of the many millions of peasants by the state and the property-owning classes, and to keeping the entire people in ignorance and deprived of rights.

The most important of all these survivals and the mightiest bulwark of all this barbarism is the Tsarist autocracy. By its very nature it is inimical to all social progress and cannot but be the most malevolent enemy of all the proletariat's strivings for freedom.

Therefore, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party takes as its most immediate political task the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy and its replacement by a democratic republic, the constitution of which would ensure:

1. Sovereignty of the people—that is, concentration of supreme state power wholly in the hands of a legislative

assembly consisting of representatives of the people and forming a single chamber.

2. Universal, equal and direct suffrage, in elections both to the legislative assembly and to all local organs of self-government, for all citizens and citizenesses who have attained the age of 20; secret ballot at elections; the right of every voter to be elected to any representative body; biennial parliaments; payment of the people's representatives.

3. Extensive local self-government; regional self-government for all localities which are distinguished by special conditions in respect of mode of life and make-up of the population.

4. Inviolability of person and domicile.

5. Unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, publication and assembly, freedom to strike and freedom of association.

6. Freedom to travel and to engage in any occupation.

7. Abolition of social estates, and complete equality of rights for all citizens, regardless of sex, religion, race and nationality.

8. Right of the population to receive education in their native language, to be ensured by provision of the schools needed for this purpose, at the expense of the state and the organs of self-government; the right of every citizen to express himself at meetings in his own language; use of the native language on an equal basis with the state language in all local, public and state institutions.

9. Right of self-determination for all nations included within the bounds of the state.

10. Right of any person to prosecute any official before a jury, through the usual channels.

11. Judges to be elected by the people.
12. Replacement of the standing army by universal arming of the people.
13. Separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church.
14. Free and compulsory general and vocational education for all children, of both sexes, up to the age of 16; poor children to be supplied with meals, clothing and textbooks at state expense.[23]

This programme clearly spells out the details of the bourgeois democratic system that was to be established once the Tsar was overthrown. This gave direction to the movement against the autocratic and oppressive Tsarist dispensation and at the time of the 1905 revolution, which was initially a spontaneous uprising, the first Soviets, the institutions of local governance were set up.

The Congress, however, was divided over the issue of what kind of members would make up the party. The minority faction, which would later become the Menshevik (meaning minority in Russian) party, believed that membership to the party should be as broad-based as possible, appealing to the widest possible group of workers in order to have a stronger party through mass numbers. The majority faction which would later become the Bolshevik (meaning majority in Russian) party, with Lenin at its head, stressed the need for militant revolutionaries in the party, believing that with the extreme political persecution in Russia coupled with the revolutionary party programme, the party could not stay on course if workers who joined were not fully dedicated to a revolutionary programme. Lenin stressed the need to differentiate between trade unions and revolutionary organisations in countries where political oppression was extreme to the extent that mixing the two together would drive

both into persecution. By separating the illegal revolutionaries from the legal trade unions, Lenin explained, the trade unions can continue to operate legitimately while the revolutionaries, being a smaller organisation, can be more secretive to avoid detection and better trained to combat the police as set out by him earlier in the tract “What is to be Done” in 1902 [24].

This was the crucial difference between the approach of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks that led to their separation with the formation of separate parties in 1912. Subsequent to the February Revolution of 1917, the Mensheviks became part of the Provisional Government in coalition with the conservative Kadets and the Social Revolutionary Party but the Bolsheviks remained out of this coalition.

The Social Revolutionaries were another party that drew its inspiration from the earlier Narodniki or People’s Will Party who had advocated going back to the traditional Russian peasant communes. This party had a large rural peasant base and it too was in favour of bringing about a bourgeois revolution first and giving possession of land to the peasants instead of nationalising it like the factories.

Subsequently, the first All Russian Congress of Soviets of workers and soldiers’ deputies was held from April 11th to 16th 2017. The majority of these deputies were from the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries but there were Bolsheviks also. Lenin on April 3rd and 4th 2017 addressed the deputies of the Bolshevik party who were to attend the Congress and presented to them the following important points as the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution. [25]

- 1) In our attitude towards the war, which under the new [provisional] government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia’s part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that

government, not the slightest concession to “revolutionary defencism” is permissible.

The class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defencism, only on condition: (a) that the power pass to the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants aligned with the proletariat; (b) that all annexations be renounced in deed and not in word; (c) that a complete break be effected in actual fact with all capitalist interests.

In view of the undoubted honesty of those broad sections of the mass believers in revolutionary defencism who accept the war only as a necessity, and not as a means of conquest, in view of the fact that they are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary with particular thoroughness, persistence and patience to explain their error to them, to explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital *it is impossible* to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence.

The most widespread campaign for this view must be organised in the army at the front.

Fraternisation.

2) The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its *second stage*, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.

This transition is characterised, on the one hand, by a maximum of legally recognised rights (Russia is *now* the

freest of all the belligerent countries in the world); on the other, by the absence of violence towards the masses, and, finally, by their unreasoning trust in the government of capitalists, those worst enemies of peace and socialism.

This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the *special* conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.

3) No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure in place of the impermissible, illusion-breeding “demand” that *this* government, a government of capitalists, should *cease* to be an imperialist government.

4) Recognition of the fact that in most of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies our Party is in a minority, so far a small minority, as against a *bloc of all* the petty-bourgeois opportunist elements, from the Popular Socialists and the Socialist-Revolutionaries down to the Organising Committee (Chkheidze, Tsereteli, etc.), Steklov, etc., etc., who have yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie and spread that influence among the proletariat.

The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies are the *only possible* form of revolutionary government, and that therefore our task is, as long as *this* government yields to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of the errors of their tactics, an *explanation* especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses.

As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time we preach the necessity of transferring the entire state power to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, so that the people may overcome their mistakes by experience.

5) Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step—but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.

Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy, i.e. the standing army to be replaced by the arming of the whole people.

The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker.

6) The weight of emphasis in the agrarian programme to be shifted to the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

Confiscation of all landed estates.

Nationalisation of *all* lands in the country, the land to be disposed of by the local Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies. The organisation of separate Soviets of Deputies of Poor Peasants. The setting up of a model farm on each of the large estates (ranging in size from 100 to 300 dessiatines, according to local and other conditions, and to the decisions of the local bodies) under the control of the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and for the public account.

7) The immediate union of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

8) It is not our *immediate* task to “introduce” socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the *control* of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies.

9) Party tasks:

(a) Immediate convocation of a Party congress;

(b) Alteration of the Party Programme, mainly:

(1) On the question of imperialism and the imperialist war,

(2) On our attitude towards the state and *our* demand for a “commune state”; i.e., a state of which the Paris Commune was the prototype.

(3) Amendment of our out-of-date minimum programme;

(c) Change of the Party’s name. Instead of “Social-Democracy”, whose official leaders *throughout* the world have betrayed socialism and deserted to the bourgeoisie (the “defencists” and the vacillating “Kautskyites”), we must call ourselves the *Communist Party*.

10. A new International: We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International, an International against the social-chauvinists and against the “Centre”. The “Centre” in the international Social-Democratic movement is the trend which vacillates between the chauvinists (=“defencists”) and internationalists, i.e., Kautsky and Co. in Germany, Longuet and Co. in France, Chkheidze and Co. in Russia, Turati and Co. in Italy, MacDonald and Co. in Britain, etc.

Lenin's most important contribution at this point of time was to orient the Bolsheviks towards achieving a proletarian revolution. Thus, all the deputies and the mass based workers led by the party began preparing to overthrow the provisional government and a first abortive attempt was made in July 1917 which failed. However, after this General Kornilov, the commander of the army on the western front, tried to make a coup in August 2017 and the provisional government released arms to the workers to prevent this. The Bolshevik militia not only repulsed the coup attempt but also gained in strength as a result of this arms bonanza and became much stronger. A situation of dual power prevailed at this time as described by Lenin-

The main feature of our revolution (February), a feature that most imperatively demands thoughtful consideration, is the *dual power* which arose in the very first days after the triumph of the revolution. This dual power is evident in the existence of *two* governments: one is the main, the real, the actual government of the bourgeoisie, the "Provisional Government" of Lvov and Co., which holds in its hands all the organs of power; the other is a supplementary and parallel government, a "controlling" government in the shape of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which holds no organs of state power, but directly rests on the support of an obvious and indisputable majority of the people, of the armed workers and soldiers. [26]

The deteriorating situation on the war front led to disaffection among the soldiers who began to join the Bolsheviks in large numbers and the workers in the cities of Petrograd and Moscow too in increasing numbers liked the radical agenda of the Bolsheviks and so the Bolsheviks attained a majority in the Soviets. Consequently, when the Second All

Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies began in October 1917, the Bolsheviks were in a majority in it. While the Congress was in session, the Bolshevik militia helped by the sailors from the Kronstadt naval garrison, overthrew the provisional government and a Soviet Government led by the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia.

Lenin, then while addressing the Congress, unequivocally stressed on the implementation of true grassroots democracy through an actualisation of Soviet power,

Comrades, It is a matter of common knowledge that the majority at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were delegates belonging to the Bolshevik Party. This fact is fundamental for a proper understanding of the victorious revolution that has just taken place in Petrograd, Moscow and the whole of Russia. Yet that fact is constantly forgotten and ignored by all the supporters of the capitalists and their unwitting *aides*, who are undermining the fundamental principle of the new revolution, namely, *all power to the Soviets*. There must be no government in Russia other than the *Soviet Government*. Soviet power has been won in Russia, and the transfer of government from one Soviet party to another is guaranteed without any revolution, simply by a decision of the Soviets; simply by new elections of deputies to the Soviets. The majority at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets belonged to the Bolshevik Party. Therefore, the only Soviet Government is the one formed by that Party. And everybody knows that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, several hours prior to the formation of the new government, and to the presentation of the list of its members to the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, summoned to its session three of the most prominent members of the group of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries,

Comrades Kamkov, Spiro and Karelin, and *invited them* to join the new government. We very much regret that the Left Socialist-Revolutionary comrades refused; we regard their refusal as impermissible on the part of revolutionaries and champions of the working people. We are ready at any moment to include Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in the government, but we declare that, as the majority party at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, we are entitled to form the government, *and it is our duty to the people to do so.*[27]

Please note that each and every line in this above statement lays down the basis of the Leninist idea of the Soviet State as being a multi-party state. We will dwell on this in more detail in Chapter 4 below. Lenin also writes that if there is a difference in the pre-revolutionary situation and in our opinion this can be extended to the post revolutionary situation without much difficulty, over participation in the bourgeois parliamentary system then there can be two communist parties,

If that failed to be achieved in Britain at once, if, in addition, no union of the supporters of Soviet power proved possible in Britain because of a difference over parliamentarism and only because of that, then I should consider a good step forward to complete unity, the immediate formation of two communist parties, i.e., two parties which stand for the transition from bourgeois parliamentarism to Soviet Power. Let one of these parties recognise participation in the bourgeois parliament, and the other reject it; this disagreement is now so immaterial that the reasonable thing would be not to split over it. But even the joint existence of two such parties would be an immense progress as compared with the present situation and would most likely be a transition to complete unity and the speedy victory of communism. [28]

That the post-revolutionary government will not be a single party one under the Marxist framework is corroborated by others also. A detailed resolution on “Socialism and Democracy” presented as a Majority Document in the 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International states,

In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one party system is a necessary precondition or feature of workers’ power, a workers state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. In no theoretical document of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky and in no programmatic document of the Third International under Lenin, did such a proposal of a one party system ever appear. [29]

Lenin, further elaborates on the nitty gritty of implementing Soviet democracy in post revolutionary Russia and says that the level of revolutionary consciousness and skill levels of the masses must rise further through prolonged education for this to be possible, as otherwise they will remain dependent on the old bourgeois bureaucracy,

We can fight bureaucracy to the bitter end, to a complete victory, only when the whole population participates in the work of government. In the bourgeois republics not only is this impossible, *but the law itself prevents it*. The best of the bourgeois republics, no matter how democratic they may be, have thousands of legal hindrances which prevent the working people from participating in the work of government. What we have done, was to remove these hindrances, but so far, we have not reached the stage at which the working people could participate in government. Apart from the law, there is still the level of culture, which you cannot subject to any law. The result of this low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working*

people by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole.

Here we are confronted by a problem which cannot be solved except by prolonged education. At present this task is an inordinately difficult one for us, because, as I have had frequent occasion to say, the section of workers who are governing is inordinately, incredibly *small*. We must secure help. According to all indications, such a reserve is growing up within the country. There cannot be the slightest doubt of the existence of a tremendous thirst for knowledge and of tremendous progress in education—mostly attained outside the schools—of tremendous progress in educating the working people. This progress cannot be confined within any school framework, but it is tremendous. All indications go to show that we shall obtain a vast reserve in the near future, which will replace the representatives of the small section of proletarians who have overstrained themselves in the work. But, in any case, our present situation in this respect is extremely difficult. Bureaucracy has been defeated. The exploiters have been eliminated. But the cultural level has not been raised, and therefore the bureaucrats are occupying their old positions. They can be forced to retreat only if the proletariat and the peasants are organised far more extensively than has been the case up to now, and only if real measures are taken to enlist the workers in government. You are all aware of such measures in the case of every People's Commissariat, and I shall not dwell on them.[30]

A multi-party system will be all the more favourable to put the bureaucracy in check. Voters can decide which party in the soviet state at a particular instant of time is willing to defend its rights against bureaucratic arbitrariness. In Chapter 5 we try to apply this idea to solve the problems posed by the Chinese bureaucracy.

The Marxist-Leninist conception of democracy, as described in detail above, thus, has the following important features –

1. There are no standing institutions of the state like the army, police, judiciary, bureaucracy and parliament which stand above the masses and dictate to them as these are all dispensed with.
2. All functionaries of the new state are elected and are revocable at any time by the electors and they perform both the legislative and the executive functions simultaneously.
3. All functionaries of the state get the same wage as the workers regardless of the work they may be doing and their position in the minimal hierarchy that is there.
4. Although disfranchising of a category of people was practiced as ordained by the revolutionary constitution of Russia, Lenin was gradually coming to the conclusion that this practice was wrong and is not to be recommended internationally.
5. The workers ally with the petty bourgeois and the peasants to implement this democracy and for this all carry out extensive education programmes to raise the level of consciousness of the masses.
6. There is no restriction on the number of parties and factions that can operate as long as they follow the basic tenets of proletarian democracy that is as long as they refrain from trying to overthrow the commune form of the state violently, which in turn implies that there is freedom of speech and expression. Governmental power can or rather shall pass from one party to another by electoral means.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

1. Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1973, pp. 326-27.
2. V.I Lenin, *Selected Works in 3 Volumes*, Vol 2, Moscow, 1977, “State and Revolution”, pp. 242.
3. Engels, *op cit*, pp 243.
4. V.I. Lenin, *op cit* pp 246.
5. -----, *op cit*, pp 253-254.
6. -----, *op cit*, pp 254.
7. -----, *op cit*, pp 258.
8. -----, *op cit*, pp 258.
9. -----, *op cit*, pp 259.
10. -----, *op cit*, pp 259.
11. -----, *op cit*, pp 262.
12. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, Selected Works, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1962, p. 22.
13. -----, “*The Civil War in France*”, Selected Works, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1962 pp 217.
14. -----, “*The Civil War in France*”, pp 218.
15. -----, “*The Civil War in France*”, pp 219.
16. -----, “*The Civil War in France*”, pp 221.
17. V.I. Lenin, *op cit*, pp 267-268.
18. -----, *op cit*, pp 311.
19. -----, *op cit*, pp 272.
20. -----, *op cit*, pp 272.

21. -----, *op cit*, pp 302.
22. -----, *op cit*, pp 302-303.
23. *Programme of the Social Democratic Workers' Party adopted at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party* <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/rsdlp/1903/program.htm>
24. V.I. Lenin, *What is to be Done*, Collected Works, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, Moscow, Volume 5, pp. 464.
25. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Volume 24, pp. 19-26.
26. -----, *op cit*, pp 60.
27. -----, *From the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party Bolshevik*, Selected Works Vol 2 pp 443,
28. Lenin, V.I (1972): *Letter to Sylvia Pankhurst*, Collected Works Vol 29 pp 565, Progress Publishers, Moscow.
29. A R Desai, *Communism and Democracy*, 2nd Edition, 1990, Antar Rashtriya Prakashan, Vadodara, pp 30.
30. V.I. Lenin, *Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)* Selected Works in 3 Volumes, Moscow, 1977, Vol 3, page 127,

Chapter 2

Soviet Democracy in the Immediate Post Revolutionary Era

Immediately after the February Revolution the Soviets began forming in the factories, the army and among the peasantry all across Russia and they took over the control of local governance in their areas. These Soviets gained even more in strength from Lenin's call of "All power to the Soviets", which he gave in July 1917, following the failure of the attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government [1] –

Democracy is the rule of the majority. As long as the will of the majority was not clear, as long as it was possible to make it out to be unclear, at least with a grain of plausibility, the people were offered a counter-revolutionary bourgeois government disguised as "democratic." But this delay could not last long. During the several months that have passed since February 27 the will of the majority of the workers and peasants, of the overwhelming majority of the country's population, has become clear in more than a general sense. Their will has found expression in mass organisations—the Soviet's of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. How, then, can anyone oppose the transfer of all power in the state to the Soviets? Such opposition means nothing but renouncing democracy!

It means no more no less than imposing on the people a government which *admittedly* can neither come into being nor hold its ground *democratically*, i.e., as a result of truly free, truly popular elections..... Things are moving by fits and starts towards a point where power will be transferred to the Soviets, which is what our Party called for long ago.

This call emboldened the workers, soldiers and peasants across Russia to push for the overthrow of the provisional government. The Soviets of workers in Petrograd formed an armed militia and were supported by the soldiers' Soviets in the army garrison as well as the sailors' Soviets in the naval garrison at Kronstadt. These three armed sections who were solidly behind the Bolsheviks responded to their call to overthrow the Provisional Government and transfer power to the Second Congress of Soviets which was in progress in Petrograd. The Provisional Government did not have at its call any armed force except a few guards of the Winter Palace and these were soon overwhelmed. Subsequently, all over Russia Soviets assumed power locally.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly of the Russian Federation following the October Revolution were held from 25th November 2017 onwards over a period of two months or so. They were the biggest such elections to be held at that time involving an electorate of 85 million people. An adapted overview of these elections and the aftermath follows based on the reporting of Victor Serge [2].

Every class and every party participated in the elections. The bourgeoisie was in profound disarray: headless, leaderless, without a plan of action or a definite tactic. Individual egoism triumphed over bourgeois class

solidarity. The Social Revolutionary (S-R) party on the other hand looked forward to the Constituent Assembly with eagerness. For long months this party had forgotten its revolutionary traditions and lived in a state of democratic befuddlement. Expecting votes from millions of peasants, from the intellectuals and from the urban middle classes, and even from radical elements of the bourgeoisie, encouraged by the international Socialist movement and the Allied governments, they were certain of a large majority at the coming Constituent Assembly.

The prospect of an S-R electoral victory embarrassed the Bolsheviks. Lenin wanted to amend the electoral law so as to give the vote at eighteen years, legalize the recall of candidates and delegates, and refuse the Kadets and counter-revolutionaries the right to vote. But the Bolsheviks had themselves urged the Assembly's convocation, which would indeed have marked a step of progress under the Provisional Government. And the provinces were looking expectantly towards it.

Lenin expounded his ideas on the Assembly in some theses he published in Pravda at the end of December. These ran as follows. The Constituent Assembly realized the highest form of democracy possible in a bourgeois republic, and therefore had its legitimate place in the programme of Social-Democracy. However, the Soviets were a form of higher democracy, the only form ensuring an uninterrupted transition to Socialism. The reckoning of the votes was false, because it was made on the basis of outdated electoral lists that had been drawn up before the great changes in the country. The party that was most popular among the peasantry, the S-Rs, went to the polls on the basis of

single lists when it was in fact split with the left S-Rs pursuing a more revolutionary proletarian line not being well represented in the lists. The majority of the people had still not had time to take account of the implications of the Soviet revolution. Fresh elections in the Army Committees, Provisional Committees, etc., indicated that political re-grouping was still taking place. Besides, the counter-revolutionaries had begun the civil war in the south and in Finland, 'thereby removing any possibility of settling the most pressing questions by methods of formal democracy.

These questions could be settled only by the complete victory of the workers and peasants and by the pitiless suppression of the slave-owners' rebellion. To consider the Constituent Assembly outside the class struggle and the civil war was to take the viewpoint of the bourgeoisie. If the Constituent Assembly opposes Soviet power it is condemned to inevitable political death. The interests of the revolution take precedence over the formal rights of the Constituent Assembly. In order to resolve the crisis, the people must use their right to re-elect the members of the Assembly, and the Assembly itself must declare itself for the Soviets and against the counter-revolution.

The elections were over by the end of November, and showed the following results on 30th December: 520 delegates were elected, of whom 161 were Bolsheviks, 267 S-Rs, forty-one Ukrainian S-Rs and Mensheviks, fifteen Kadets, three Mensheviks and thirty-three (most of these S-R) from national minorities or small parties. 36,262,560 voters took part in the ballot, with the following distribution of votes:

Parties	Votes Polled	Percentage
Bourgeois parties (Kadets, etc.)	4,600,000	13
Social Revolutionaries	20,900,000	58
Mensheviks	1,700,000	4
Bolsheviks	9,023,963	25

Thus, the Mensheviks and S-Rs together obtained 22,600,000 votes, or sixty-two per cent of the total. These results were discussed by Lenin in 1919 in a remarkable study entitled **The Elections to the Constituent Assembly and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat**. The rural areas had voted for S-Rs, the industrial cities for the Bolsheviks. The immense majority of the proletariat had gone over to the Bolsheviks. For the two cities, Moscow and Petrograd, the combined results were showing a big majority for the Bolsheviks :

Kadets	515,000
S-Rs	218,000
Bolsheviks	837,000
Total	1,570,000

The distribution of votes in the army and fleet was equally significant with the S-Rs and the Bolsheviks neck and neck but with the former nosing ahead :

S-Rs	1,885,000
Kadets	51,000
National minorities	756,000
Bolsheviks	1,791,000

More than half the army,' concluded Lenin, 'was with the Bolsheviks, or we could not have won.' Another decisive fact he noted was that on the fronts nearest the capital, which were the best informed and most decisive sections, i.e. on the western and the northern front, the Bolsheviks had an overwhelming majority: a million votes to 420,000 for the S-Rs.

Thus, although the Bolsheviks had only gathered *a quarter* of the votes, they had a clear advantage among the workers and the soldiers.

In all the capitalist countries, the forces of the proletariat are infinitely greater than its numerical strength as a proportion of the population. The proletariat has economic domination over the centres and sinews of the entire capitalist economy. The votes of the peasant masses, said Lenin, can only be won by the proletariat after it has seized power. Political power in the hands of the proletariat can and must become the means of drawing the non-proletarian toiling masses to its side, the means of wresting these masses from the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois parties.

The Constituent Assembly was above all the ideal of the S-R party which was committed to bourgeois democracy. The peasants were glad to vote for the S-R party, 'their' party, and were quite definite that they wanted land. Since the S-R majority in the Assembly was bound inevitably to collide with the Bolsheviks who were in power and controlled the state apparatus including the military, they had to think of defence and armament. A Committee for the Defence of the Constituent Assembly was set up, quite openly, in premises that were a hive of activity, in the centre of the city. It was purely a committee of intellectuals,

without contact with the workers or the soldiers in the garrison.

The S-R party's own Military Organization was much more a force to be reckoned with. It had a controlling influence on two regiments, the Semyonovsky and the Preobrazhensky, that were part of the garrison. Here it could count on as many as 600 of its members. It could also call on the armoured-car division, and it published an anti-Bolshevik newspaper, *Seraya Shinel* (*The Grey Greatcoat*). Several dozen S-R soldiers, who had been recalled from the front, were organized under the cover of a 'People's University for Soldiers'. There was also the Battle Organization of the party's terrorists, thirty or so hardened men. These forces were quite considerable. Had they been deployed properly, they would have been a power for the Bolsheviks to reckon with; since they were not deployed at all, they became demoralized and soon disintegrated.

The S-R leaders, dominated by a parliamentary obsession, seemed to have lost all contact with reality. The S-R fraction in the Constituent Assembly established an office not far from the Tauride Palace, in which it proceeded to a laborious work of preparation, under inspiration from Chernov and Avksentiev, the leaders of the party. Committees, sub-committees, working parties, all deliberated at length every day, detailing draft laws, studying the future democratic Constitution, preparing, in short, to legislate and govern, complete with an appropriate Western-style ceremonial.

Absorbed in their parliamentary preoccupations, the deputies would not hear of any plans for resistance against possible Bolshevik violence. Their house was

open to all. They had no idea of the invigilation being exercised over their telephone conversations. Dedicated to their labours, they never set foot in the barracks or in the factories, where their Bolshevik colleagues were busy recruiting.

The Federation of Employees and Public Officers offered to support them with a general strike; they turned down the offer. When the tasks of defence were mentioned, the reply was: Defend ourselves? Are we not the elected representatives of the sovereign people? They thought that the Constituent Assembly was protected by some vague power: the great people of Russia, who would not permit any profanation of the noblest ideal which had sprung from the revolution. The S-R leadership, and particularly Chernov, lived in this parliamentary hallucination. ‘The Bolsheviks will not dare ...’, they kept declaring.

Gotz seems to have been a little less befuddled. He took an active part in preparing for the ‘peaceful demonstration’ of 5th January 1918, which was intended to rally the streets for the Assembly on the day it had its opening. The S-R Central Committee decided on this move only at the last moment. Everything was ready to transform the event into an insurrection. Thirty armoured cars were to advance against Smolny where the Soviet Government was headquartered. The S-R regiments would have supported the *coup*. But the Constituent Assembly fraction condemned the initiative just as it was ready.

The S-R terrorist group made efficient preparations for the kidnapping, or assassination, of Lenin and Trotsky. Its members had managed to infiltrate the Smolny staff: one of them had become Lenin’s chauffeur, and

another was the porter at a house that Lenin often visited. An equally effective trap had been arranged around Trotsky. At the last minute the party's Central Committee refused to authorize these ventures. Their reasons? The two leaders of the revolution were too popular; their disappearance would have provoked terrible reprisals; besides, the era of terrorism was over. It was a strange mixture of political naivete and sheer timidity.

In the factories under their influence, the S-Rs who came to urge a struggle against the Bolsheviks were rudely received. They were asked if they couldn't reach some better understanding with the Bolsheviks, who are devoted to the people's cause. Through the work of the Bolshevik agitators, the Committees of the Semyonovsky and Preobrazhensky regiments eventually gave way and deserted the S-Rs.

The demonstration of 5th January 2018 was numerous attended *en masse* by the petty-bourgeois citizens, who thronged the main thoroughfares of the city. A few rifle-shots fired here and there by the sailors scattered this ineffectual crowd, deserted and disarmed as it was by irresolute leaders.

Meeting in this atmosphere of botched insurrection, the Constituent Assembly found itself doomed. A number of S-R members came to ask their leaders, If the Bolsheviks use violence, hit us, kill us even, what is to be done? A very definite answer was made, which perfectly fitted the ideology of the S-Rs: Let us remember that we are the people's elected representatives ... and must be ready for the sacrifice of our lives. The deputies decided not to separate, so as to be ready to confront tragedy together. And they

assembled a stock of ... sandwiches and candles – in case the Bolsheviks cut off electricity and supplies.

Y.M. Sverdlov, the Chairman of the All-Russian Soviet Executive, opened the session of the Constituent Assembly. Sverdlov, who was one of the best organizers in the Bolshevik party, had no difficulty in quelling the indescribable din in the first minutes of the gathering. The huge hall of the Tauride Palace, newly decorated for the occasion, had a festive air. Smartly dressed, with red ribbons in their buttonholes, the deputies of the majority filled the benches of the right and the centre of the hall. The less numerous left side, on the other hand, had noisy support from the public galleries, which were thronged with soldiers, sailors and workers.

Sverdlov proposed that the Assembly should endorse the *Declaration of the Rights of the Labouring and Exploited Masses*, an authoritative document composed by Lenin and promulgated by the All-Russian Soviet Executive. In it, Russia was proclaimed to be a Federative Republic of Soviets, a free union of free nations. According to the text, the Assembly was to associate itself unreservedly with the Socialist revolution; approve the nationalization of the land, distributed to the toilers, without payment, on the basis of equal access and use; approve the Soviet laws on workers' control of production and the establishment of the Supreme Economic Council to consolidate the power of the workers over their exploiters and as a first step towards total expropriation of the means of production and transport; approve the nationalization of the banks; decree the universal obligation to labour, the formation of a Socialist Red Army and

the total disarmament of the propertied classes. In the international field, the Decree once again affirmed the principle of a democratic peace, without annexations or indemnities, the repudiation of the colonial politics of bourgeois society, and the annulment of the debts owed by the Tsar, the landlords and the bourgeoisie, as a first blow against the international bankers and finance capital. Finally, the Assembly was to decree that the exploiters could have no place in any of the institutions of authority. It was to limit its own work to the general elaboration of the fundamental principles for the Socialist transformation of society.

The majority did not support this Declaration. Once Sverdlov had finished reading the declaration, they refused any discussion, on the grounds that too much time was being wasted and passed on to the election of a Chairman. The Left (Bolsheviks and Left S-Rs) proposed the Left S-R leader Maria Spiridonova, the former terrorist, whose excellent character and total Socialist dedication were known to all. The majority had previously fixed its choice on V.M. Chernov, the official head of the S-R party. Chernov was elected by 244 votes, against 153 for Maria Spiridonova. He at once ascended the rostrum to deliver an inordinately long and rambling presidential speech, with the flavour of a ministerial announcement. He advocated 'a general peace of the peoples as distinct from a separate peace and spoke of the socialist army which had to be organized. He outlined a complicated constitution which envisaged the collaboration of the Constituent Assembly with the Soviets and the Constituent Assemblies of the different nationalities, proclaimed the definite liberation of the Ukraine and the Russian Moslems and announced the Popular Federative

Republic of Russia. Several times he touched upon the nation's 'will for Socialism', remarking, 'The revolution has merely begun ... The people want actions, not words ... socialism is not equality among poverty ... We desire controlled Socialist construction ... We shall pass from the control of production to the republic of labour ... Finally, he endorsed the nationalization of the land without compensation.

Bukharin refuted Chernov in a short speech. How, he asked, can a man talk of the will to Socialism and at the same time be the assassin of Socialism?' Was it a matter of a Socialism to be won in two centuries? Of Socialists who were collaborating with the counter-revolution? Which side was he on – with the bourgeoisie, or with the workers, soldiers and peasants? Who is to have the power now? Is what you want a miserable little bourgeois parliamentary republic? In the name of the great Soviet republic of labour, we declare war to the death on such a government. Let the ruling classes and their servants tremble before the Communist revolution. The workers have nothing to lose but their chains.

Tseretelli, the only Menshevik present, presented his party's position. He said they are not Socialists who incite the proletariat to aim for its final goal without having passed through the stage of bourgeois democracy which alone can make it strong. You have taken overproduction, he challenged the Bolsheviks but have you succeeded in organizing it? The land taken by the peasants has in reality been taken by the kulaks, the rich peasants who possess the farming equipment. Your peace negotiations are risking the destiny of Russian Socialism and democracy on the hazardous throw of a

European revolution. You are trampling underfoot the bourgeois-democratic freedoms for which people have gone to the gallows. The revolution is in danger of collapsing under the burden it has massed. My party, he said, is not afraid of unpopularity. We shall guard the torch of the working class for the future. He ended his address with an appeal for conciliation among the different parties present. No, dictatorship of a minority, or the result will be anarchy, followed by reaction. Let there be instead a democratic republic, with universal suffrage; expropriation of the land-owners, without compensation; revival, control and regularization of production by the State; an eight-hour day and social insurance for the workers; restoration of democratic liberties; equality for the nationalities, and a struggle for peace.

The debate went on, confused and stormy, but adding nothing to these first basic declarations. Then Raskolnikov, to the applause of the galleries and the jeers of the majority of delegates, read out the declaration of the Bolsheviks which Lenin had drafted: Not wishing to draw a veil for a single minute over the crimes committed by the enemies of the people, we declare our withdrawal from the Constituent Assembly, relying on the power of the Soviets to decide definitely on the attitude to be adopted towards the counter-revolutionary section of this Assembly.

After a moment of surprise, the Assembly proceeded with its agenda. An endless chain of speeches and declarations unrolled. High in the public galleries, the crowd brooded malevolently. At about 4 a.m., after the Left S-Rs had also withdrawn, with a declaration similar to that of the Bolsheviks, the Chairman was

just reading out the ten articles of the 'fundamental draft law on the land', when the anarchist sailor Zheleznyakov, who was a member of the guard for the Assembly, came up to the presidential rostrum.

There was silence in the hall. The sailor leaned over slightly and said something which could not be heard. Chernov flopped against the back of his ornamental chair and said, But, the members of the Constituent Assembly are tired too. No amount of tiredness can interrupt the reading of the agrarian law which is awaited by the whole of Russia! The sailor spoke again. This time his firm tones, ironic, unthreatening and calm, came out into the hall: The guards are tired. Please leave the hall. Chernov looked down over the astonished Assembly. I have a proposal before me, he said, to close the session without further debate, after adopting the basic draft of the agrarian law. Votes were taken hastily, solemn texts were seen off in a feverish hurry, to the menacing interruptions of the gallery, which chanted with insistent fury: *That's enough! That's enough!* The following night the decree dissolving the Constituent Assembly came out.

Lenin spoke in justification of the measure before the All-Russian Soviet Executive: 'While no Parliament has ever, anywhere, given the slightest support to the revolutionary movement, the Soviets blow into the fire of revolution and say imperiously to the people: Fight: take everything in your own hands: organize yourselves!' It is a mystery to nobody that every revolutionary movement is accompanied by chaos, ruination and temporary troubles.

Thus, proletarian democracy prevailed over bourgeois parliamentary democracy. It was clear that the S-Rs would have

pursued the path of bourgeois democracy and that is why the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly to scotch that possibility. Lenin discussed this difference between bourgeois and proletarian democracy at length in the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1919 [3] -

The last point I have to deal with is the question of *the leading role of the proletariat and disfranchisement*. Our Constitution recognises the precedence of the proletariat in respect of the peasants and disfranchises the exploiters. It was this that the pure democrats of Western Europe attacked most. We answered, and are answering, that they have forgotten the most fundamental propositions of Marxism, they have forgotten that with them it is a case of bourgeois democracy, whereas we have passed to *proletarian* democracy. There is not a single country in the world which has done even one-tenth of what the Soviet Republic has done in the past few months for the workers and the poor peasants in enlisting them in the work of administering the state. That is an absolute truth. Nobody will deny that in the matter of true, not paper, democracy, in the matter of enlisting the workers and peasants, we have done more than has been done or could be done by the best of the democratic republics in hundreds of years. It was this that determined the significance of the Soviets, it was owing to this that the Soviets have become a slogan for the proletariat of all countries.

But this in no way saves us from stumbling over the inadequate culture of the people. We do not at all regard the question of disfranchising the bourgeoisie from an absolute point of view, because it is theoretically quite conceivable that the dictatorship of the proletariat

may suppress the bourgeoisie at every step without disfranchising them. This is theoretically quite conceivable. Nor do we propose our Constitution as a model for other countries. All we say is that whoever conceives the transition to socialism without the suppression of the bourgeoisie is not a socialist. But while it is essential to suppress the bourgeoisie as a class, it is not essential to deprive them of suffrage and of equality. We do not want freedom for the bourgeoisie, we do not recognise equality of exploiters and exploited, but this question is so handled in the programme that the Constitution does not prescribe such measures as the inequality of workers and peasants. They were embodied in the Constitution *after* they were already in actual practice. It was not even the Bolsheviks who drew up the Constitution of the Soviets; it was drawn up to their own detriment by the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries before the Bolshevik revolution. They drew it up in accordance with the conditions actually obtaining. The organisation of the proletariat proceeded much more rapidly than the organisation of the peasants, which fact made the workers the bulwark of the revolution and gave them a virtual advantage. The next task is gradually to pass from these advantages to their equalisation. Nobody drove the bourgeoisie out of the Soviets either before or after the October Revolution. *The bourgeoisie themselves left the Soviets.*

That is how the matter stands with the question of suffrage for the bourgeoisie. It is our task to put the question with absolute clarity. We do not in the least apologise for our behaviour, but give an absolutely precise enumeration of the facts as they are. As we point out, our Constitution was obliged to introduce this

inequality because the cultural level is low and because with us organisation is weak. But we do not make this an ideal; on the contrary, in its programme the Party undertakes to work systematically to abolish this inequality between the better organised proletariat and the peasants. We shall abolish this inequality as soon as we succeed in raising the cultural level. We shall then be able to get along without such restrictions. Even now, after some seventeen months of revolution, these restrictions are of very small practical importance.

These, comrades, are the main points on which I believed it necessary to dwell in the general discussion of the programme, in order to leave their further consideration to the debate.

Proletarian democracy allows factions within a party and also many parties as long as the overall goal is socialist with workers and peasants in control of the means of production and the state. This basic democratic principle was enshrined in the following provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Socialist Republic adopted in July 1918 [4].

1. Russia is declared to be a republic of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies. All the central and local power belongs to these soviets.
2. (g) For the purpose of securing the working class in the possession of complete power, and in order to eliminate all possibility of restoring the power of the exploiters, it is decreed that all workers be armed, and that a Socialist Red Army be organized and the propertied class disarmed.
3. The Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies believes that now, during the progress of the decisive battle between the

proletariat and its exploiters, the exploiters should not hold a position in any branch of the Soviet Government. The power must belong entirely to the toiling masses and to their plenipotentiary representatives- the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies.

4. In its effort to create a league- free and voluntary, and for that reason all the more complete and secure- of the working classes of all the peoples of Russia, the Third Congress of Soviets merely establishes the fundamental principles of the Federation of Russian Soviet Republics, leaving to the workers and peasants of every people to decide the following question at their plenary sessions of their soviets, namely, whether or not they desire to participate, and on what basis, in the Federal government and other Federal soviet institutions.
5. For the purpose of securing freedom of expression to the toiling masses, the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic abolishes all dependence of the Press upon capital, and turns over to the working people and the poorest peasantry all technical and material means for the publication of newspapers, pamphlets, books, etc., and guarantees their free circulation throughout the country.
6. For the purpose of enabling the workers to hold free meetings, the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic offers to the working class and to the poorest peasantry furnished halls, and takes care of their heating and lighting appliances.
7. The Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, having crushed the economic and political power of the propertied classes, and having thus abolished all obstacles which interfered with the freedom of

organization and action of the workers and peasants, offers assistance, material and other, to the workers and the poorest peasantry in their effort to unite and organize.

8. For the purpose of guaranteeing to the workers real access to knowledge, the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic sets itself the task of furnishing full and general free education to the workers and the poorest peasantry.
9. Voters who have sent a deputy to the soviet have the right to recall him, and to have a new election, according to general provisions.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

1. V.I. Lenin, *All Power to the Soviets, Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Moscow, Volume 25, pages 155-156.
2. Victor Serge, “*Year One of the Russian Revolution*”, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1972 pp 125-135.
3. V.I. Lenin, *Speech at Eighth Congress of RCP (B)*, Selected Works, Vol 3, Moscow, 1977, page 128-129.
4. *Constitution of The Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic adopted at the Fifth All Russian Congress of Soviets on July 10th 1918* (<https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/constitution/1918/article6.htm>)

Chapter 3

Workers' Control of Production in the Immediate Post Revolutionary Russia

The Russian proletariat were the driving force behind the Russian Revolution and they rose enthusiastically not only to seize political power but also to take over the sphere of production through their Factory Committees. The Factory Committees were, in fact, the smallest units of proletarian democracy which sent delegates to both the Trade Unions and the Soviets which were at a higher level. The Factory Committees were consequently the basic units of workers' control not only of production but also of the proletarian dictatorship. Thus, it was the Factory Committees who actualised in the industrial centres, especially Petrograd and Moscow, proletarian democracy by actualising control of the means of production. As one Bolshevnik organiser said [1]

The proletariat without legislative sanction, started simultaneously to create all its organisations: Soviets of Workers' Deputies, trade unions and factory committees.

The Conference of the Factory Committees of the Petrograd War Industries held on April 2nd 1917 issued a proclamation in which it was stipulated –

From the Factory Committee should emanate all instructions concerning internal factory organization

(i.e. instructions concerning such matters as hours of work, wages, hiring and firing, holidays, etc.). The factory manager to be kept notified...The whole administrative personnel (management at all levels and technicians) is taken on with the consent of the Factory Committee which has to notify the workers of its decisions at mass meetings of the whole factory or through shop committees...The Factory Committee controls managerial activity in the administrative, economic and technical fields...representatives of the Factory Committee must be provided, for information, with all official documents of the management, production budgets and details of all items entering or leaving the factory. [2]

The first full conference of Petrograd Factory Committees was held from May 30th to June 5th 1917 and the delegates said—

Working of the factories is now in the exclusive hands of higher management. We must introduce the principle of election. To assess work...we don't need the individual decisions of foremen. By introducing the elective principle we can control production..... by taking into our own hands the control of production we will learn about its practical aspects and raise it to the level of future socialist production.[3]

However, these factory committees came in conflict with the industry level trade unions which tried to assert their top-down control over them. The Third All Russian Conference of Trade Unions held in Petrograd in June 1917 and it not only downgraded the role of trade unions in management of factories by saying that,

The trade unions, while defending the rights and interests of hired labour cannot take upon themselves

administrative economic functions in production” but also relegated the factory committees to seeing “that laws for the defence of labour were observed and that collective agreements concluded by the unions were also observed and they should work to strengthen and extend the trade unions and increase their authority in the eyes of unorganised workers.”[4]

The factory committees which had sprung up spontaneously much before the trade unions were in no mood to give up their control of production and formed an autonomous factory committee movement of their own to assert their independence from the trade unions. The Second Conference of Factory Committees of Petrograd, its Environs and Neighbouring Provinces was held at the Smolny Institute in Petrograd from August 7th to 12th 1917.

The Conference adopted resolutions that stated unequivocally that

All decrees of Factory Committees were compulsory for the factory administration as well as for the workers and employees - until such time as those decrees were abolished by the Committee itself, or by the Central Soviet of Factory Committees.[5]

Further provisions made at the Conference were as follows[6]

1. Committees were to meet regularly. Meetings were to be held on days designated by the Committees themselves. Members of the Committees were to receive full pay - from the employers - while on Committee business. Notice to the appropriate administrative personnel was to be deemed sufficient to free a member of the Factory Committee from work so that he might fulfil his obligations to the Committee.
2. In the periods between meetings, selected members of the Factory Committees were to occupy premises, within

the factory, at which they could receive information from the workers and employees.

3. Factory administrations were to provide funds “for the maintenance of the Committees and the conduct of their affairs”.
4. Factory Committees were to have control over the composition of the administration and the right to dismiss all those who could not guarantee normal relations with the workers or who were incompetent for other reasons.
5. All administrative factory personnel could only enter into service with the consent of the Factory Committee, which must declare its hirings at a General Meeting of all the factory or through departmental or workshop committees.” The “internal organization” of the factory (working time, wages, holidays, etc.) was also to be determined by the Factory Committees.
6. Factory Committees were to have their own press and were to inform the workers and employees of the enterprise concerning their resolutions by posting an announcement in a conspicuous place.

The First All Russian Conference of Factory Committees was held from October 17th to 22nd 1917 just at the time of the October Revolution and Lenin stressed the revolutionary role of the factory committees in his speech –

We must shift the centre of gravity to the Factory Committees. The Factory Committees must become the organs of insurrection. We must change our slogan and instead of saying ‘All Power to the Soviets’ we must say ‘All Power to the Factory Committees’. [7]

However, soon after this Lenin changed tack as in formulating the “Draft Regulations on Workers’ Control” which was published initially in Pravda on November 3rd 1917 he stated the following[8]–

1. The decisions of the elected representatives of the workers and employees in factory committees are binding upon the owners of enterprises but that they could be annulled by trade unions and congresses.
2. In all enterprises of state importance, all owners and all representatives of the workers and office employees elected to exercise workers’ control were to be answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property
3. By enterprises of state importance are meant all enterprises working for defence purposes, or in any way connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population.

Thus, this provided the basis for the trade unions and the Soviet state to overrule the factory committees, a process that began almost immediately after the adoption of these regulations by the All Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets on November 14th 1917. The regulations stated that in the interests of a planned regulation of the national economy, there was to be a hierarchy of workers’ control with the factory committees being subservient to the regional councils of workers’ control which in turn were subordinated to the All Russian Council of Workers’ Control. These upper bodies had heavy representation from trade unions and the party and very few delegates from the factory committees.

A plan was devised by the Factory Committees, wherein, individual factory committees would send forward suggestions for organisation of production that came from

the workers to the federation of factory committees to see how they could be applied to the industry as a whole. These were to be the instructions from the shop floor. They felt that control of production was the task of the committee in each establishment. The committees of each town and higher could then meet and establish co-ordination on a regional basis. The factory committees tried to convene an All Russian Congress of Factory Committees to give practical shape to this plan but this was prevented by the trade unions and the Soviet Government. [9]

The Supreme Economic Council (Vesenka) was set up on December 5 1917 and it was assigned the task of working out a plan for the organization of the economic life of the country and the financial resources of the government. The Vesenka was to direct to a uniform end the activities of all existing economic authorities, central and local, including the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control. [10]

Vesenka was to be attached to the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). It had a few members of the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control, a huge representation from all the new Commissariats and a number of experts, nominated by the Sovnarkom in a consultative capacity. The Vesenka was to have a double structure:

- (a) The "centres" (Glavki), designed to deal with different sectors of industry, and
- (b) The regional organs: the Local Council of National Economy" (Sovnarkhozy).

This new body absorbed the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control before the latter had even begun working. This step was a move by the Soviet Government of "statisation" of economic authority and marginalisation of the factory committees.

We needed a more efficient form of organization than the Factory Committees and a more flexible tool than workers' control. We had to link the management of the new factories to the principle of a single economic plan and we had to do it in relation to the socialist perspectives of the young workers' state...the Factory Committees lacked practice and technical know-how...The enormous economic tasks of the transition period towards socialism necessitated the creation of a single organism to normalize the national economy on a state-wide basis. Freeing the Factory Committees of their mandates, which no longer corresponded to the new economic needs, the workers delegated authority to the newly created organ, the Council of National Economy.[11]

The Central Council of the Petrograd Factory Committees published the Practical Manual for the Implementation of Workers' Control of Industry in December 2017.[12]

The Manual made a number of concrete suggestions to the Factory Committees. Each Committee should set up four control commissions, entitled to invite the attendance of technicians and others in a consultative capacity. The functions of the four commissions were to be:

- (a) the organization of production;
- (b) the reconversion from war production;
- (c) the supply of raw materials; and
- (d) the supply of fuel.

The proposals are developed in considerable detail. It is stressed throughout that "workers' control" is not just a question of taking stock of the supplies of raw

materials and fuel but that it is intimately related to the transformation of these raw materials within the factory - in other words with the totality of the work processes culminating in a finished product. The "production commission" should be entrusted with the task of establishing the necessary links between the different sections of the factory, of supervising the state of the machinery, of advising on and overcoming various deficiencies in the arrangement of the factory or plant, of determining the coefficients of exploitation in each section, of deciding on the optimum number of shops, and of workers in each shop, of investigating the depreciation of machines and of buildings, of determining job allocations (from the post of administrator down) and of taking charge of the financial relations of the factory.

The authors of the Manual announce that they intend to group the Factory Committees into Regional Federations and these in turn into an All-Russian Federation. And to be sure there was no misunderstanding they stressed that: "workers' control of industry, as a part of workers' control of the totality of economic life, must not be seen in the narrow sense of a reform of institutions but in the widest possible sense: that of moving into fields previously dominated by others. Control should merge into management." In practice the implementation of workers' control took on a variety of forms, in different parts of Russia. These were partly determined by local conditions but primarily by the degree of resistance shown by different sections of the employing class. In some places the employers were expropriated forthwith, "from below". In others they were merely submitted to a supervisory type of "control", exercised by the Factory

Committees. There was no predetermined model to follow. The various practices and experiments were at first the subject of heated discussions. They should be seen as essential by all who accepted that the advance towards socialism can only come about through the *self-emancipation* of the working class.

Isvestiya published on December 13th 2017, the General Instructions on Workers' Control in Conformity with the Decree of November 14th 2017. This became known as the Counter Manual.[13]

The first four sections deal with the organization of workers' control in the factories and with the election of control commissions. The next five sections decree the duties and rights of these commissions, stressing which functions they should undertake and which should remain the prerogative of the owner-managers.

Section 5 stresses that insofar as the commissions play any real role in the management of enterprises, this role should be confined to supervising the carrying out of directives issued by those Central Government agencies "specifically entrusted with the regulation of economic activity on a national scale".

Section 7 states that: "the right to issue orders relating to the management, running and functioning of enterprises remains in the hands of the owner. The control commissions must not participate in the management of enterprises and have no responsibilities in relation to their functioning. This responsibility also remains vested in the hands of the owner."

Section 8 specifies that the commissions should not concern themselves with matters relating to finance, all such matters being the prerogative of the Central Governmental Institutions.

Section 9 specifically forbids the commissions from expropriating and managing enterprises. They are however entitled to “raise the question of taking over enterprises with the Government, through the medium of the higher organs of workers’ control”.

Section 14 decrees that the Factory Committees were to be merged with the union apparatus: “The control commissions in each factory were to constitute the executive organs of the ‘control of distribution section’ of the local trade-union federation. The activities of the control commissions should be made to conform with the decisions of the latter.”

Thus, in 1917 itself workers’ control of production was jettisoned and the Soviet State assumed control of the management of the factories, mines, building sites or other enterprises marginalising the factory committees completely.

The first All Russian Congress of Trade Unions was held in Petrograd from January 7th to 14th 2018. The two main themes that were discussed were the relations between the factory committees and the trade unions and the relations between the trade unions and the Soviet State. According to Lozovsky, a Bolshevik trade unionist –

The Factory Committees were so much the owners and masters that three months after the Revolution they were to a significant degree independent of the general controlling organs of the Soviet State. [14]

Another Bolshevik, Ryazanov, suggested that the factory committees should commit suicide by becoming an integral element of the trade union structure. [15]

The Anarcho-syndicalist, Maximov, countered this by saying that,

“As the offspring of the Revolution the Committees would create a new production on a new basis”. The unions “which corresponded to the old economic relations of Tsarist times had lived out their time and couldn’t take on this task”. A great conflict between state power in the centre and the organizations composed exclusively of workers which are found in the localities would ensue if the factory committees were made subservient to the trade unions. The aim of the proletariat was to co-ordinate all activity, all local interest, to create a centre but not a centre of decrees and ordinances but a centre of regulation, of guidance - and only through such a centre to organize the industrial life of the country.” [16]

The rank and file worker, Belusov, speaking on behalf of the factory committees said,

All this will freeze local work. Are we to stand still locally, wait and do nothing? Only then will we make no mistakes. Only those who do nothing make no mistakes. Real workers’ control was the solution to Russia’s economic disintegration. “The only way out remaining to the workers is to take the factories into their own hands and manage them.” [17]

The Anarcho-syndicalist, Shatov, brought matters to a climax by saying that

Trade unions were “living corpses” and the working class should organize in the localities and create a free, new Russia, without a God, without a Tsar, and without a boss in the trade union. Real workers’ control, not state workers’ control” with organization of production, transport and distribution should be in the hands of the toiling people themselves and not in that of the state or some civil service machine made up

of one kind or other of class enemy. [18]

These proposals were shot down by the Bolshevik majority and the final resolution that was adopted had the following to say

“It is not within the competence of the lower organs of workers’ control to be entrusted with financial control function...this should rest with the highest organs of control, with the general apparatus of management, with the Supreme Council of National Economy. In the sphere of finance everything must be left to the higher organs of workers’ control. [19]

For workers’ control to be of maximum use to the proletariat it was absolutely necessary to refrain from atomizing it. Workers of individual enterprises should not be left the right to make final decisions on questions touching upon the existence of the enterprise.[20]

“The trade unions must go over each decree of the Factory Committees in the sphere of control, explain through their delegates at the factories and shops that control over production does not mean the transfer of the enterprise into the hands of the workers of a given enterprise, that it does not equal the socialization of production and exchange.[21]

“The trade unions ought to shoulder the main burden of organizing production and of rehabilitating the country’s shattered economic forces. Their most urgent tasks consist in their energetic participation in all central bodies called upon to regulate output, in the organization of workers’ control, in the registration and distribution of the labour force, in the organization of exchange between town and countryside...in the struggle against sabotage and in enforcing the

general obligation to work...As they develop the trade unions should, in the process of the present socialist revolution, become organs of socialist power, and as such they should work in co-ordination with and *subordination* to other bodies in order to carry into effect the new principles...The Congress is convinced that in consequence of the foreshadowed process, *the trade unions will inevitably become transformed into organs of the socialist state*. Participation in the trade unions will for all people employed in any industry be their duty *vis-à-vis* the State”. [22]

This centralisation of the control of production by the Soviet state was further cemented by the Vesenska which issued a decree in March 1918,

Defining the functions of technical management in industry. Each administrative centre was to appoint to every enterprise under its care a *commissioner* (who would be the government representative and supervisor) and *two directors* (one technical and the other administrative). The technical director could only be overruled by the government commissioner or by the “Central Direction” of the industry. The decree laid down the principle that “in nationalized enterprises workers’ control is exercised by submitting all declarations and decisions of the Factory or Shop Committee, or of the control commission, to the Economic Administrative Council for approval. [23]

This was followed by the Central Council of Trade Unions issuing directions on April 3rd 1918 to trade unions for maintaining labour discipline –

The trade unions should “apply all their efforts to raise the productivity of labour and consistently to create in factories and workshops the indispensable foundations

of labour discipline". Every union should establish a commission "to fix norms of productivity for every trade and category of workers". The use of piece rates "to raise the productivity of labour" was conceded. It was claimed that "bonuses for increased productivity above the established norm may within certain limits be a useful measure for raising productivity without exhausting the worker". Finally, if "individual groups of workers" refused to submit to union discipline, they could in the last resort be expelled from the union "with all the consequences that flow there-from".

The left communist faction within the Bolshevik party had misgivings about these developments and in the first issue of its journal *Kommunist* edited by Bukharin, Radek and Osinsky, a paper entitled "Theses on the Present Situation" was published which had the following to say,

A labour policy designed to implant discipline among the workers under the flag of 'self-discipline', the introduction of labour service for workers, piece rates, and the lengthening of the working day in connection with the restoration of capitalist management of industry cannot really increase the productivity of labour". It would "diminish the class initiative, activity and organization of the proletariat. It threatens to enslave the working class. It will arouse discontent among the backward elements as well as among the vanguard of the proletariat. In order to introduce this system in the face of the hatred prevailing at present among the proletariat against the 'capitalist saboteurs', the Communist Party would have to rely on the petty-bourgeoisie, as against the workers". It would "ruin itself as the party of the proletariat".[24]

The second issue of the journal had the following comments by Osinsky,

“We stand for the construction of the proletarian society by the class creativity of the workers themselves, not by the ukases of the captains of industry...if the proletariat itself does not know how to create the necessary prerequisites for the socialist organization of labour no one can do this for it and no one can compel it to do this. The stick, if raised against the workers, will find itself in the hands of a social force which is either under the influence of another social class or is in the hands of the soviet power; but the soviet power will then be forced to seek support against the proletariat from another class (e.g. the peasantry) and by this it will destroy itself as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism and socialist organization will be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all: something else will be set up - state capitalism.[25]

Finally, Preobrazhensky warned in May, 2018 –

The party will soon have to decide what degree the dictatorship of individuals will be extended from the railroads and other branches of the economy to the Party itself.[26]

Lenin replied to this criticism at length as follows –

State Capitalism would be a step forward as compared with the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic. If in approximately six months' time state capitalism became established in our Republic, this would be a great success and a sure guarantee that within a year socialism will have gained a permanently firm hold and will have become invincible in this country... the present system contains elements, particles, fragments

of both capitalism and socialism...

1. Patriarchal, ie, to a considerable extent natural, peasant farming
2. Small commodity production (this includes the majority of those peasants who sell their grain)
3. Private capitalism
4. State Capitalism
5. Socialism.

The question arises: What elements predominate? Clearly, in a small-peasant country, the petty-bourgeois element predominates and it must predominate, for the great majority—those working the land—are small commodity producers. The shell of state capitalism (grain monopoly, state-controlled entrepreneurs and traders, bourgeois co-operators) is pierced now in one place, now in another by *profiteers*, the chief object of profiteering being *grain*.

It is in this field that the main struggle is being waged. Between what elements is this struggle being waged if we are to speak in terms of economic categories such as “state capitalism”? Between the fourth and fifth in the order in which I have just enumerated them? Of course not. It is not state capitalism that is at war with socialism, but the petty bourgeoisie plus private capitalism fighting together against state capitalism and socialism. The petty bourgeoisie oppose *every kind* of state interference, accounting and control, whether it be state-capitalist or state-socialist. This is an unquestionable fact of reality whose misunderstanding lies at the root of many economic mistakes. The profiteer, the commercial racketeer, the disrupter of

monopoly—these are our principal “internal” enemies, the enemies of the economic measures of the Soviet power. A hundred and twenty-five years ago it might have been excusable for the French petty bourgeoisie, the most ardent and sincere revolutionaries, to try to crush the profiteer by executing a few of the “chosen” and by making thunderous declarations. Today, however, the purely French approach to the question assumed by some Left Socialist-Revolutionaries can arouse nothing but disgust and revulsion in every politically conscious revolutionary. We know perfectly well that the economic basis of profiteering is both the small proprietors, who are exceptionally widespread in Russia, and private capitalism, of which every petty bourgeois is an agent. We know that the million tentacles of this petty-bourgeois octopus now and again encircle various sections of the workers, that instead of state monopoly, profiteering forces its way into every pore of our social and economic organism.

The petty bourgeoisie have money put away, the few thousands that they made during the war by “honest” and especially by dishonest means. They are the characteristic economic type, that is, the basis of profiteering and private capitalism. Money is a certificate entitling the possessor to receive social wealth; and a vast section of small proprietors, numbering millions, cling to this certificate and conceal it from the “state”. They do not believe in socialism or communism, and “mark time” until the proletarian storm blows over. Either we subordinate the petty bourgeoisie to our control and accounting (we can do this if we organise the poor, that is, the majority of the population or semi-proletarians, round the politically conscious proletarian vanguard), or they

will overthrow our workers' power as surely and as inevitably... That is how the question stands. That is the only view we can take of the matter. . .

The petty bourgeois who hoards his thousands is an enemy of state capitalism. He wants to employ these thousands just for himself, against the poor, in opposition to any kind of state control. And the sum total of these thousands, amounting to many thousands of millions, forms the base for profiteering, which undermines our socialist construction.

The workers hold state power and have every legal opportunity of "taking" the whole, without giving up a single kopek, except for socialist purposes. This legal opportunity, which rests upon the actual transition of power to the workers, is an element of socialism. But in many ways, the small-proprietary and private-capitalist element undermines this legal position, drags in profiteering and hinders the execution of Soviet decrees. State capitalism would be a gigantic step forward *even if* we paid *more* than we are paying at present, because it is worth paying for "tuition", because it is useful for the workers, because victory over disorder, economic ruin and laxity is the most important thing, because the continuation of the anarchy of small ownership is the greatest, the most serious danger, and it will *certainly* be our ruin (unless we overcome it), whereas not only will the payment of a heavier tribute to state capitalism not ruin us, it will lead us to socialism by the surest road. When the working class has learned how to defend the state system against the anarchy of small ownership, when it has learned to organise large-scale production on a national scale along state-capitalist lines, it will hold, if

I may use the expression, all the trump cards, and the consolidation of socialism will be assured.

In the first place, *economically*, state capitalism is immeasurably superior to our present economic system.

In the second place there is nothing terrible in it for the Soviet power, for the Soviet state is a state in which the power of the workers and the poor is assured. . . .

To make things even clearer, let us first of all take the most concrete example of state capitalism. Everybody knows what this example is. It is Germany. Here we have “the last word” in modern large-scale capitalist engineering and planned organisation, *subordinated to Junker-bourgeois imperialism*. Cross out the words in italics, and in place of the militarist, Junker, bourgeois, imperialist state put also a state, but of a different social type, of a different class content—a Soviet state, that is, a proletarian state, and you will have the sum total of the conditions necessary for socialism.

Socialism is inconceivable without large-scale capitalist engineering based on the latest discoveries of modern science. It is inconceivable without planned state organisation which keeps tens of millions of people to the strictest observance of a unified standard in production and distribution.

At the same time socialism is inconceivable unless the proletariat is the ruler of the state. This also is ABC. And history has taken such a peculiar course that it has given birth in 1918 to two unconnected halves of socialism existing side by side like two future chickens in the single shell of international imperialism. In 1918, Germany and Russia had become the most

striking embodiment of the material realisation of the economic, the productive and the socio-economic conditions for socialism, on the one hand, and the political conditions, on the other.[27]

Lenin, thus, bringing up the negative role of the petty bourgeoisie, places greater trust in the Soviet State as controller of the economy than the grassroots factory committees and soviets which in his opinion will not be able to counter the profiteering tendencies of the petty bourgeoisie.

The main problem facing the Soviet State was the chaotic economic situation that Russia was in, following the October Revolution which is detailed by Tony Cliff as follows[28]-

The whole of Russia was in a state of turmoil. A vivid description of the economic breakdown is given by an English observer, a reporter for the *Manchester Guardian*, travelling in Russia during 1917 and 1918:

It is no exaggeration to say that during November, December, and the greater part of January something approaching anarchy reigned in the industries of Northern Russia ... There was no common industrial plan. Factory Committees had no higher authority to which to look for direction. They acted entirely on their own and tried to solve those problems of production and distribution which seemed most pressing for the immediate future and for the locality. Machinery was sometimes sold in order to buy raw materials. The factories became like anarchistic Communes ... anarcho-syndicalist tendencies began to run riot.

War-damaged industry continued to run down. 'The bony hand of hunger', with which the capitalist Riabushinsky had threatened the revolution, gripped the whole population in the spring of 1918. Powerful

evidence of the gravity of the situation was provided by a telegram which Lenin and the food Commissar, Tsiurupa, dispatched to all provincial Soviets and food committees on 11 May 1918:

Petrograd is in an unprecedentedly catastrophic condition. There is no bread. The population is given the remaining potato flour and crusts. The Red capital is on the verge of perishing from famine. Counter-revolution is raising its head, directing the dissatisfaction of the hungry masses against the Soviet Government. In the name of the Soviet Socialist Republic, I demand immediate help for Petrograd. Telegraph to the Food Commissariat about the measures you have taken.

Bread riots were widespread throughout the country. The famine was so acute [wrote Victor Serge] that at Tsarkoe Selo, not far from Petrograd, the people's bread ration was only 100 grams per day. Rioting results. Cries of 'Long live the Constituent Assembly!' and even 'Long live Nicholas II!' were heard (this on 6–7 April). On 19 April there were 'hunger riots' ... at Smolensk ...

In this period [writes one worker-militant] hardly any horses were to be seen in Petrograd; they were either dead, or eaten or requisitioned, or sent off into the countryside. Dogs and cats were no more visible either ... People lived on tea and potato-cakes made with linseed oil. As a member of the EC of the Vyborg Soviet [in Petrograd] I know that there were whole weeks in which no issues of bread or potatoes were made to the workers; all they got was sunflower seeds and some nuts ... Soviet power seemed to be in a desperate situation.

Speaking in Moscow before a popular meeting,

Trotsky displayed a sheaf of telegrams: 'Viksi, Nizhni-Novgorod province: the shops are empty, work is going badly, shortage of 30 per cent of the workers through starvation. Men collapsing with hunger at their benches.' From Serglev-Posada the telegram says: 'Bread, or we are finished!' From Bryansk, 30 May: 'Terrible mortality, especially of children, around the factories of Maltsov and Bryansk; typhus is raging.' From Klin, near Moscow: 'The town has had no bread for two weeks.' 'From Paslov-Posada: The population is hungry, no possibility of finding corn.' From Dorogobuzh: 'Famine, epidemics ...'

One of the causes of the famine was the breakdown of transport. The number of disabled locomotives increased from 5,100 on January 1917 to 10,000 on 1 January 1918; so that by the latter date 48 per cent of the total were out of commission.

Industry was in a state of complete collapse. Not only was there no food to feed the factory workers; there was no raw material or fuel for industry. The oilfields of the Baku, Grozny and Emba regions came to a standstill. The situation was the same in the coalfields. The production of raw materials was in no better a state. The cultivation of cotton in Turkestan fell to 10–15 per cent of the 1917 level.

The collapse of industry meant unemployment for the workers. In Petrograd 18,000 workers from the 'Treugolnik' plant were thrown out of work, when the establishment was closed because of lack of fuel. The Petrograd tube works were transferred to Penza: 20,000 Petrograd workers lost their jobs. At the works of Siemens and Halske, the numbers of men fell from 1,200 to 700, and later to 300. The Nevsky

shipbuilding works also closed, 10,000 men being dismissed. The Obukhov works were shut down, due to lack of coal. Altogether, 14,000 men were dismissed. The same thing happened at the Putilov works, where more than 30,000 men were laid off. A similar collapse of industry and mass sackings of workers took place in other towns.

Drastic measures had to be taken. And Lenin was not one to shirk responsibility, however unpleasant the task. Lenin tackled the issue of labour discipline also by saying that whereas before the revolution workers had to strike work to get better wages and working conditions out of their employers, the situation had changed after the revolution and the workers must impose self-discipline and increase productivity -

We say that every new social order demands new relations between man and man, a new discipline. There was a time when economic life was impossible without feudal discipline, when there was only one kind of discipline – the discipline of the lash; and there was a time of the rule of the capitalists, when the disciplinary force was starvation. But now, with the Soviet revolution, with the beginning of the socialist revolution, discipline must be built on entirely new principles; it must be a discipline of faith in the organizing power of the workers and poor peasants, a discipline of comradeship, a discipline of the utmost mutual respect, a discipline of independence and initiative in the struggle.[29]

We must raise the question of piece-work and apply and test it in practice; we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system; we must make wages correspond to the total amount of goods turned out, or to the

amount of work done by the railways, the water transport system, etc., etc ... The task that the Soviet government must set the people in all its scope is – learn to work. The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field. The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organization of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism. We must organize in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our own ends.[30]

The left communists on the other hand stressed that

Early nationalization of the means of production would have avoided many of these ambiguities. Total expropriation of the capitalists would have allowed one to proceed immediately from “workers’ control” to “workers’ management” through the medium of some central organism regulating the whole of the socialized economy. It is interesting that Lozovsky, although at the time strongly opposed to the viewpoint of the “left” Communists (because he felt that the Revolution had only been a “bourgeois-democratic” revolution), was later to write: “It was soon to be proved that in the era

of social revolution, a constitutional monarchy in each enterprise was impossible and that the former owner - however complex the structure of a modern enterprise - was a superfluous cog” [31]

The Civil War against the White Counter Revolutionaries took centre stage from the autumn of 1918 and imposed its harsh conditions. Not only were all enterprises big and small nationalised but both agricultural and industrial production was geared to provisioning the military. This led to both industrial workers and peasants being alienated and reluctant to produce. This in turn brought in repression from the secret police and the military on the one hand and serious shortages of food and industrial goods, especially in the urban areas, on the other. Sometimes even the military had to go on limited rations and without adequate weapons.

The Civil War was more or less won by the Soviet Government by the spring of 1920 but the harsh rules constricting the economy were not relaxed even after that and so the hardships of the workers and peasants continued due to shortages of food and other necessities. Trotsky submitted his “Theses on the Transition from War to Peace” in which he proposed the militarisation of labour. That is the use of the iron discipline that is applied in the armed forces to workers so as to force them to produce. Trotsky published “Terrorism and Communism” in July 1920 which clearly sets out his ideas on the organisation of labour at that time –

The creation of a socialist society means the organization of the workers on new foundations, their adaptation to those foundations and their labour re-education, with the one unchanging end of the increase in the productivity of labour. [32]

Wages, in the form of both money and goods, must be brought into the closest possible touch with the

productivity of individual labour. Under capitalism the system of piecework and of grading, the application of the Taylor system, etc., have as their object to increase the exploitation of the workers by the squeezing out of surplus value. Under socialist production, piecework, bonuses, etc., have as their problem to increase the volume of the social product...those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless and the disorganizers.[33]

The very principle of compulsory labour is for the Communist quite unquestionable...the only solution to economic difficulties that is correct from the point of view both of principle and of practice is to treat the population of the whole country as the reservoir of the necessary labour power - an almost inexhaustible reservoir - and to introduce strict order into the work of its registration, mobilization and utilization.[34]

The introduction of compulsory labour service is unthinkable without the application, to a greater or lesser degree, of the methods of militarization of labour.[35]

The unions should discipline the workers and teach them to place the interests of production above their own needs and demands. The young Workers' State requires trade unions not for a struggle for better conditions of labour - that is the task of the social and state organizations as a whole - but to organize the working class for the ends of production.[36]

It would be a most crying error to confuse the question as to the supremacy of the proletariat with the question of boards of workers at the head of factories. The dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed in

the abolition of private property in the means of production, in the supremacy over the whole soviet mechanism of the collective will of the workers and not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered. [37]

The deep alienation of workers and peasants arising from their having to do forced labour led to widespread unrest and there were many workers strikes and peasant uprisings in the later months of 1920 and at the start of 1921. Political opposition also began to build up within the party and factions which had been clamped down on during the civil war began to form again. A major such faction was the Workers' Opposition and the main points it made were –

The leadership of the Party and of Government bodies had in the last two years systematically narrowed the scope of trade union work and reduced almost to nil the influence of the working class.

The Party and the economic authorities, having been swamped by bourgeois technicians and other non proletarian elements displayed outward hostility to the unions.

The remedy was the concentration of industrial management in the hands of the trade unions. The transition should take place from below up: At the factory level, the Factory Committees should regain their erst while dominant position.

The Opposition proposed more trade union representation in various controlling bodies. Not a single person was to be appointed to any administrative-economic post without the agreement of the trade unions. Officials recommended by the trade unions were to remain accountable for their conduct to the

unions, who should also have the right to recall them from their posts at any time.

An “All-Russian Producers’ Congress” should be convened to elect the central management of the entire national economy. National Congresses of separate unions were similarly to elect managements for the various branches of the economy.

Local and regional managements should be formed by local trade union conferences, while the management of single factories was to belong to the Factory Committees, which were to remain part of the trade union organization.

This will create the unity of will which is essential in the organization of the economy, and also a real possibility for the influence of the initiative of the broad working masses on the organization and development of the economy.

A radical revision of the wages policy in an extremely egalitarian spirit: money wages were to be progressively replaced by rewards in kind. [38]

The unrest by the workers reached its climax in the revolt of the naval garrison at the island of Kronstadt in the River Neva next to Petrograd in March 2021. This naval garrison had played a major part right from the time of the February 1917 revolution. It had one of the most democratically functioning Soviets which continued to so function even during the Civil War years when other Soviets were subordinated to the State bureaucracy. Earlier, these sailors had responded immediately to the call of the Bolsheviks for overthrowing the Provisional Government first in the abortive attempt of July 1917 and then in the successful one of October 1917. The Kronstadt Soviet passed the following resolution of demands on February 28th 1917[39] –

Having heard the report of the representatives sent by the general meeting of ships' crews to Petrograd to investigate the situation there, we resolve:

1. In view of the fact that the present soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, immediately to hold new elections by secret ballot, with freedom to carry on agitation beforehand for all workers and peasants;
2. To give freedom of speech and press to workers and peasants, to anarchist and left socialist parties;
3. To secure freedom of assembly for trade unions and peasant organizations;
4. To call a non-party conference of the workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Constant, and Petrograd province, no later than 10 March 1921;
5. To liberate all political prisoners of socialist parties, as well as all workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors imprisoned in connection with the labor and peasant movements;
6. To elect a commission to review the cases of those being held in prisons and concentration camps;
7. To abolish all political departments, since no party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive the financial support of the state for such purposes. Instead cultural and educational commissions should be established, locally elected and financed by the state;
8. To remove all road block detachments immediately; [Armed squads which confiscated food that was illegally purchased from the peasantry.]
9. To equalize the rations of all working people, with the

exception of those employed in trades detrimental to health;

10. To abolish the Communist fighting detachments in all branches of the army, as well as Communist guards kept on duty in factories and mills. Should such guards or detachments be found necessary, they [are] to be appointed in the army from the ranks and in the factories and mills at the discretion of the workers;
11. To give peasants full freedom of action in regard to the land, and also the right to keep cattle, on condition that the peasants manage with their own means, that is, without employing hired labor;
12. To request all branches of the army, as well as our comrades the military cadets, to endorse our resolution;
13. To demand that the press give all our resolutions wide publicity;
14. To appoint an itinerant bureau of control;
15. To permit free handicrafts production by one's own labor.

The Soviet Government refused to meet these demands and instead sent in the army and crushed the revolt killing thousands of sailors on March 17th and 18th 2021.

The Soviet Government was rattled by this turn of events and so it withdrew its war time regulations and introduced what came to be known as the New Economic Policy (NEP) at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March 1921. The following are its main features –

1. The tax-in-kind rates were considerably reduced below the previous requisition quotas, which permitted the peasants to dispose of their food surpluses on the open market.

2. Market forces were allowed further through the denationalization of small-scale industry and services and the establishment of trusts for supplying, financing, and marketing the products of large-scale industry.
3. The currency was stabilised and concessions granted to foreign investors.
4. The economic linkage between town and country was thus established through the market instead of through central requisition.

Thus, there was a retreat from the earlier goal of setting up a worker controlled socialist economy and polity to the establishment of a state capitalist economy and a polity controlled by the Communist Party even after the end of the War against the Counter Revolutionaries over riding the demands from the workers for greater control of production at the factory level and a more plural and free democracy.

Footnotes to Chapter 3

1. A M Pankratova, *Russian Factory Committees for the Socialist Factory*, Moscow 1923, p 9.
2. -----, *op cit*, p 12-13.
3. -----, *op cit*, p 19
4. *Resolutions Adopted at the Sessions of The Conference Third All Russian Conference of Trade Unions: of June 20 -28/July 3 – 11, Petrograd*, p 18.
5. *The October Revolution and the Factory Committees: Materials for a History of the Factory Committees*, Moscow, Three Volumes, 1927-29, Vol I pp 229-259.
6. Maurice Brinton, *Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*, , Solidarity, London, 1970, pp 22-23.
7. As cited by G K Ordzhonikidze, *Selected Articles and Speeches*, Moscow, 1939, p 124.

8. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Vol 26, 1972 pp 264-265.
9. Brinton, *op cit*, p 33.
10. The *Nationalisation of Industry in the USSR: Collected Documents and Source Material*, Moscow, 1954, pp 499.
11. Pankratova *op cit*, pp 59.
12. Maurice Brinton, *op cit*, pp39-40.
13. Maurice Brinton, *op cit*, pp 40-41
14. *Proceedings of the First All Russian Congress of Trade Unions*, 7 – 14 January, 2018, Moscow, 1918, p 193.
15. *ibid* p 235.
16. *ibid* p 85.
17. *ibid* p 221.
18. Maurice Brinton, *op cit*, pp 49-50.
19. *Proceedings of the First All Russian Congress of Trade Unions*, 7 – 14 January, 2018, Moscow, 1918, p 195.
20. *ibid* p 369.
21. *ibid* p 370.
22. *ibid*, p 364.
23. Maurice Brinton, *op cit*, pp 53-54.
24. K Radek, *After Five Months*, Kommunist Issue 1, April 1918, pp 3-4.
25. Osinsky, *On the Building of Socialism*, Kommunist Issue 2, April 1918, p 5.
26. Preobrazhensky, *Editorial*, Kommunist Issue 4, May 1918, p 2.

27. V.I. Lenin, *Collected works*, 1st English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, vol 32, pp 330-335.
28. Tony Cliff, *Lenin*. (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1978/lenin3/ch06.html>)
29. V. I. Lenin, *Collected works*, 1st English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, vol 27, pp 515.
30. *ibid*, pp 258-259.
31. Maurice Brinton, *op cit*, p63.
32. L Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1961 p 146.
33. *ibid*, p 149
34. *ibid*, p 135.
35. *ibid*, p 137.
36. *ibid*, p 143.
37. *ibid* p 162.
38. Maurice Brinton, *op cit*, pp 95-96.
39. *Petropavlovsk Resolution* (<https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/events/kronstadt/1921/resolution.htm>)

Chapter 4

The Rise of Single Party (Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)) Governance after the Death of Lenin

In the context of the present topic it is first of all necessary to clarify that the term ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ as used by Lenin is synonymous with the phrases ‘proletarian state’ or ‘workers’ state’ and in Russian it was to be controlled by the Soviets. [1]

‘The latter (bourgeois state – the present author) *cannot* be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) ..’ ‘Soviets are the Russian form of proletarian dictatorship’ [2]

Similarly the term the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is used by Lenin to mean the bourgeois state power irrespective of the form and content of democracy. [3]

Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

We have seen in Chapter 1 that for Lenin, a single all encompassing criteria for the success of the proletarian revolution is the increase of democracy over and above bourgeois democracy and given the experience of the few limited breakthroughs in the advance of world socialism, notably

China, Cuba etc., it is imperative to declare emphatically that either have multiparty democracy or there is no progress towards a class less society but a return to capitalism. This is the dismal truth of the past century and more after the October Revolution and the global working class has to face it.

The first instance as far as our knowledge goes regarding an equality between working class power in the USSR (Russian Federation plus a few other newly formed republics of the old Tsarist empire) and that of a one party rule was spelt out by Stalin in 1926. [4]

This does not mean, however, that the power of one class, the class of proletarians, which does not and cannot share power with other classes, does not need aid from, and an alliance with the labouring and exploited masses of other classes for the achievement of its aims. On the contrary, this power, the power of one class can be firmly established and exercised to the full only by means of a special form of alliance between the class of proletarians and the labouring mass of the petty bourgeois classes, primarily the labouring masses of the peasantry.

What is the special form of this alliance? What does it consist in? Does not this alliance with the labouring masses of other, non-proletarian, classes wholly contradict the idea of the dictatorship of one class?

This special form of alliance consists in that the guiding force of this alliance is the proletariat. This special form of alliance consists in that the leader of the state, the leader in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, is *one* party, the party of the proletariat, the Party of the Communists, which *does not and cannot share* leadership with other parties.

Thus, not only there can be no coalition government with any other soviet party but the process of soviet election and the formation of a new government is completely done away with. This is the exact opposite of what Lenin wrote and also of the content of the Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic of 1918 that has been spelt out fully by the present author earlier but not only has been completely ignored by Stalin but all this apparently has been done by him in order to defend Leninism. To get an approval in support of this new theory of one party rule or one party state he produces several quotations from the works of Lenin but because of the limitations of space here we will deal with five selected ones which prove according to Stalin, Lenin's inclination towards a dictatorship of one party as a form of the proletarian state. Thus, according to Stalin

In Lenin's numerous works I have been able to note only five cases in which he touches, in passing, on the question of the dictatorship of the party. [5]

In our opinion yes in the three of these five cases Lenin does in fact make a mention of 'dictatorship of the party' but only to polemicise against his opponents who are accusing the Bolsheviks of creating a single party rule based on the majority they held in the Soviets. In the two other cases contrary to Stalin's claim, the phrase does not even appear in what Lenin says and so we will quote all the five as fully as possible as some of these quotations as they appear are truncated by Stalin to the extent of being scandalous. The first of these quotations is -

When we are reproached with having established a dictatorship of one party and, as you have heard, a united socialist front is proposed, we say, "Yes, it is a dictatorship of one party! This is what we stand for and we shall not shift from that position because it is the party that has won, in the course of decades,

the position of vanguard of the entire factory and industrial proletariat. This party had won that position even before the revolution of 1905. It is the party that was at the head of the workers in 1905 and which since then—even at the time of the reaction after 1905 when the working-class movement was rehabilitated with such difficulty under the Stolypin Duma—merged with the working class and it alone could lead that class to a profound, fundamental change in the old society.” When a united socialist front is proposed to us we say that it is the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties that propose it, and that they have wavered in favour of the bourgeoisie throughout the revolution. We have had a double experience—the Kerensky period when the Socialist-Revolutionaries formed a coalition government that was helped by the Entente, that is, by the world bourgeoisie, the imperialists of France, America and Britain. What did that result in? Was there that gradual transition to socialism they had promised? No, there was collapse, the absolute rule of the imperialists, the rule of the bourgeoisie and the complete bankruptcy of all sorts of illusions about class conciliation. [6]

This clearly shows that the Bolsheviks through their hard work and propaganda over several years had gained the majority support in the Soviets and so who are these parties that are demanding a coalition government with the aim of restricting the anti-capitalist measures taken by the Bolsheviks? These parties if they function within the rules of the Soviet Constitution have every right to win a majority in the Soviets and form their own governments and that is what Lenin is implying. It is the height of nonsense from this to draw support for Stalin’s idea (See the quotation marked 4 above) that the party of the Communists cannot share leadership with other parties.

The second quotation is as follows,

Some people (especially the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries—all of them, even the “Lefts” among them) are trying to scare the peasants with the bogey of the “dictatorship of one party”, the Party of Bolsheviks, Communists.

The peasants have learned from the Kolchak regime not to be afraid of this bogey.

Either the dictatorship (i.e., the iron rule) of the landowners and capitalists, or the dictatorship of the working class.....

.....In the Urals and Siberia the workers and peasants had an opportunity of comparing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the working class. The dictatorship of the working class is being implemented by the Bolshevik Party, the party which as far back as 1905 and even earlier merged with the entire revolutionary proletariat. [7]

This shows that Stalin had conveniently left out from his truncated quotation Lenin’s idea of *implementation* of the dictatorship of the proletariat by some political party and this is a fundamental point in his formulation of his theory of proletarian revolution. Given a choice to the working class of a number of political parties and this fact is adequately treated in our previous chapters, the working class can make the best choice as to what is most suitable for its historic interests and the implementation of the programme of a transition to a classless society, which is the only interest the proletariat can have will then indeed be realised. Thus, there can be no doubt as to what Lenin had in mind when he asked the peasants to not to be afraid of the bogey of the dictatorship of the party peddled by the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. There is

no place for a red Tsar to pave the way for the restoration of capitalism that befell the fate of USSR.

The third quotation contains the words ‘the dictatorship of its organised and class conscious minority and this in no way ‘touches in passing on the question of the dictatorship of the party’ and hence is a falsification of Lenin’s statements. In fact Lenin says he agrees with Tanner who is opposed to all parties and this may appear quite strange to anyone not well versed in Marxism. Here is the quotation in full exactly as given by Stalin

Tanner says that he stands for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of the proletariat is not conceived quite in the same way as we conceive it. He says that by the dictatorship of the proletariat we mean, in essence, the dictatorship of its organised and class-conscious minority.

And, as a matter of fact, in the era of capitalism, when the masses of the workers are continuously subjected to exploitation and cannot develop their human potentialities, the most characteristic feature of working-class political parties is that they can embrace only a minority of their class. A political party can comprise only a minority of the class, in the same way as the really class-conscious workers in every capitalist society constitute only a minority of all the workers. That is why we must admit that only this classconscious minority can guide the broad masses of the workers and lead them. And if Comrade Tanner says that he is opposed to parties, but at the same time is in favour of the minority consisting of the best organised and most revolutionary workers showing the way to the whole of the proletariat, then I say that there is really no difference between us”[8]

From here Stalin goes on to state [9]

Firstly. In the passage from his speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern quoted above, Lenin does not by any means identify the leading role of the Party with the dictatorship of the proletariat. He merely says that “only this class-conscious minority(i.e., the Party – J.St) can guide the broad masses of the workers and lead them”, that it is *precisely in this sense* that “by the dictatorship of the proletariat we mean, *in essence*, the dictatorship of its organised and class-conscious minority.”

The falsification here is the equality between class-conscious minority and the party introduced in the parantheses by Stalin as this minority may be divided up into several parties. For this see Lenin’s letter to Sylvia Pankhurst quoted by us above (Chapter 1 Footnote 28).

The fourth place in which Stalin tries to drum up support for his one party and possibly a single leader’s dictatorship is purportedly Lenin’s writing in several places of the text named ‘Left wing Communism and Infantile Disorder’. We will just quote one of these passages a little more fully so as not to make it mean exactly opposite of what it is intended to be by Lenin.

The mere presentation of the question—“dictatorship of the party *or* dictatorship of the class; dictatorship (party) of the leaders, *or* dictatorship (party) of the masses?”—testifies to most incredibly and hopelessly muddled thinking. These people want to *invent* something quite out of the ordinary, and, in their effort to be clever, make themselves ridiculous. It is common knowledge that the masses are divided into classes, that the masses can be contrasted with classes only by contrasting the vast majority in general, regardless of division according to status in the social system of production, with categories holding a

definite status in the social system of production; that as a rule and in most cases—at least in present-day civilised countries—classes are led by political parties; that political parties, as a general rule, are run by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members, who are elected to the most responsible positions, and are called leaders. All this is elementary. All this is clear and simple. Why replace this with some kind of rigmarole, some new Volapük? [10]

Thus, to counterpose the dictatorship of the masses to that of the leaders is absurd because it creates a *rigmarole* (a word assiduously avoided by Stalin) that is precisely to be done away with. In fact no leader has the exclusive right to eternal leadership (possibly until their death) and this is what Lenin thought of his own leadership just as it played an important historic role of creating a new form of power in practice never imagined before in history and he added no more or less significance to this fact. The fifth case as stated by Stalin is Lenin's draft outline of the dictatorship of the proletariat where the subheading 'dictatorship of one party' appears and this is completely untrue. The full text of this document can be verified by the interested reader [11]

Thus, so much of distortion of Leninism with the use of the same brand name leaves us in doubt as to what was the actual motivation behind these actions of Stalin. Was he actually fulfilling the historic interest of the working class? To answer this question we just give two more quotations. One from Lenin and the other from Stalin so as not to burden the reader with too many of these.

When we discussed the question of rates of pay with the Commissar for Labour, Schmidt, he mentioned facts like these. He said that in the matter of equalising

wages we have done more than any bourgeois state has done anywhere, or can do in scores of years. Take the pre-war rates of pay: a manual labourer used to get one ruble a day, twenty five rubles a month, while an expert got five hundred rubles a month, not counting those who were paid hundreds of thousands of rubles. The expert used to receive twenty times more than the worker. Our present rates of pay vary from six hundred rubles to three thousand rubles—only five times more. We have done a great deal towards equalising the rates. Of course, we are now overpaying experts, but to pay them a little more for giving us their knowledge is not only worth while, but necessary and theoretically indispensable. In my opinion, this question is dealt with in sufficient detail in the programme. It must be particularly stressed. Not only must it be settled here in principle, but we must see to it that every delegate to the Congress, on returning to his locality, should, in his report to his organisation and in all his activities, secure its execution.[12]

What is the cause of the fluidity of manpower? The cause is the wrong structure of wages, the wrong wage scales, the 'Leftist' practice of wage equalisation. In a number of factories.... In order to put an end to this evil we must abolish wage equalisation and discard the old wage scales [13]

Thus, if Soviet power existed as in the immediate aftermath of 1917 this fluidity of manpower would have been settled in a socially accepted democratic way by the workers themselves without resorting to these bourgeois reforms and the consequent dismantling of the social gains of the Russian revolution.

An important argument in favour of the one party state was elaborated by Stalin while discussing the draft constitution of the USSR to be adopted at the end of 1936. This constitution

according to him was needed to recognise the fact that Soviet society had entered the first phase of communism. We are not going into the perfectness of this 'Marxist' position of Stalin regarding communism which can take place in a separate discussion. But the main point here is Stalin's trampling upon proletarian democracy and the 'Marxist' arguments advanced in this justification of the one party state –

I must admit that the draft of the new Constitution does preserve the regime of the dictatorship of the working class, just as it also preserves unchanged the present leading position of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. (*Loud applause.*) If the esteemed critics regard this as a flaw in the Draft Constitution, that is only to be regretted. We Bolsheviks regard it as a merit of the Draft Constitution. (*Loud applause.*)

As to freedom for various political parties, we adhere to somewhat different views. A party is a part of a class, its most advanced part. Several parties, and, consequently, freedom for parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes whose interests are mutually hostile and irreconcilable - in which there are, say, capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, kulaks and poor peasants, etc. But in the U.S.S.R. there are no longer such classes as the capitalists, the landlords, the kulaks, etc. In the U.S.S.R. there are only two classes, workers and peasants, whose interests - far from being mutually hostile - are, on the contrary, friendly. Hence, there is no ground in the U.S.S.R. for the existence of several parties, and, consequently, for freedom for these parties.

In the U.S.S.R. there is ground only for one party, the Communist Party. In the U.S.S.R. only one party can exist, the Communist Party, which courageously

defends the interests of the workers and peasants to the very end. And that it defends the interests of these classes not at all badly, of that there can hardly be any doubt. [14]

One must first note that this whole argument is not self consistent because it states that the party is the part of a class, its most advanced part, whilst in the USSR, there are two friendly classes, as the result of which, and the country being the dictatorship of the working class, there is just ground for one party to exist and govern. Thus, there are two classes and the party being the advanced section of a class there can only be grounds for two friendly parties to exist in the USSR and not just ground for one party as per Stalin's claim. By curbing the existence of these parties or their forced merger one is stopping all debates about the socioeconomic direction that the USSR should take amidst the situation when Nazism and fascism are in power in Germany and Italy respectively. However, there are much more serious objections to the nature of the Soviet Society in 1936 as depicted by Stalin here and one of these comes from the editorial department of Renmin Ribao in 1964 which did have the approval of Mao ze Dong. It states –

As the Soviet Union was the first, and at the time the only, country to build socialism and had no foreign experience to go by, and as Stalin departed from Marxist-Leninist dialectics in his understanding of the laws of class struggle in socialist society, he prematurely declared after agriculture was basically collectivized that there were “no longer antagonistic classes” ^[1] in the Soviet Union and that it was «free of class conflicts» ^[2], one-sidedly stressed the internal homogeneity of socialist society and overlooked its contradictions, failed to rely upon the working class and the masses in the struggle against the forces of capitalism and

regarded the possibility of restoration of capitalism as associated only with armed attack by international imperialism. This was wrong both in theory and in practice.[15]

Thus, the very notion of the presence of non-antagonistic friendly classes on which this theory of one party state for the USSR is created falls apart. However, at this point we are not going into the statements like 'Stalin remains a great Marxist Leninist' in that same pamphlet of the Chinese Party as it is beyond the scope of our present pamphlet. We just state that this theory of the relation between party and the class is a *rigmarole*, a word which we quoted above from Lenin. We just list many of the nationally significant parties in the present state of the Indian union along with some small parties which have a proclaimed link to Marxism. These are Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Janata Dal, Biju Janta Dal, Trinamool Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Dravida MunnetraKazhagam, Telegu Desam, National Conference, All India Muslim League, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India, Socialist Unity Centre of India etc. in the first category and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) factions, Liberation, Red Star, New Democracy along with a party which claims to wage a people's war to overthrow the present bourgeois order, the Communist Party of India (Maoist). We can count eighteen political parties from the above list and almost all have an all India presence and the reader should take note that this list is only partial. Our question to the second category of the listed parties and the individuals who claim to adhere to Marxism-Leninism is that what are the eighteen classes in the Indian social system if you do accept Stalin's theory that 'the party is the most advanced part of a class'?

Footnotes

1. Lenin, V.I., (1977): *The State and Revolution*, Selected Works in three volumes, vol 2 p 252 , Progress Publishers, Moscow.
2., *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Selected Works in three volumes, vol 3, p 40, Progress Publishers, Moscow.
3. -----, *The State and Revolution*, Selected Works in three volumes , 1977, vol 2 p 262
4. Stalin, J.V., (1976): *Concerning Questions of Leninism, Problems of Leninism*, Foreign Language Press, pp 173, Peking.
5. Stalin, J.V., (1976): *Concerning Questions of Leninism ,Problems of Leninism*, Foreign Language Press, pp 203, Peking.
6. Lenin, V.I (1972): *Speech at the First All Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture*, July 31st 1919, Collected Works Vol 29 pp534, Progress Publishers, Moscow
7. Lenin, V.I., (1977): *Letter to the Workers and Peasants Apropos of the Victory over Kolchak*, Selected Works in three volumes, vol 3, p 221-222, Progress Publishers, Moscow.
8. Stalin, J.V., (1976): *Concerning Questions of Leninism, Problems of Leninism*, Foreign Language Press, pp 184, Peking
9. Ibid, pp 185.
10. Lenin, V.I., (1977): *Left Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder*, Selected Works in three volumes , 1977, vol

3 p 308

11. ----- (1965): *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Collected Works Vol 30, Progress Publishers, Moscow. Pp 93-104
12. Lenin, V.I., (1977): *Eighth Congress of the RCP(B) March 18th to 23rd 1919*, Selected Works in three volumes , 1977,vol 3 p 125.
13. Stalin, J.V., (1976): *New Conditions – New Tasks in Economic Construction*, Problems of Leninism, Foreign Language Press, pp 537, Peking
14. Stalin, J.V., (1976): *On the Draft Constitution of the USSR Nov 25th 1936*, Problems of Leninism, Foreign Language Press, pp 819, Peking
15. the Editorial Departments of Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) and Hongqui (Red Flag), China, of 14 July 1964. Pp 15 *On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons For the World.*

Chapter 5

The Chinese Revolution

The character of the Chinese Revolution is best discerned from the writings of Mao Ze Dong,

During the War of Liberation, China solved the tasks of the democratic revolution. The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked the basic conclusion of the democratic revolution and the beginning of the transition to socialism. It took another three years to conclude the land reform, but at the time the Republic was founded we immediately expropriated the bureaucratic capitalist enterprises -- 80 percent of the fixed assets of our industry and transport -- and converted them to ownership by the whole people.

During the War of Liberation we raised antibureaucratic capitalist slogans as well as anti-imperialist and antifeudal ones. The struggle against bureaucratic capitalism had a two sided character: it had a democratic revolutionary character insofar as it amounted to opposition to compradore capitalism, but it had a socialist character insofar as it amounted to opposition to the big bourgeoisie.

After the war of resistance was won, the Nationalist Party [KMT] took over a very large portion of

bureaucratic capital from Japan and Germany and Italy. The ratio of bureaucratic to national [i.e., Chinese] capital was 8 to 2. After liberation we expropriated all bureaucratic capital, thus eliminating the major components of Chinese capitalism.

But it would be wrong to think that after the liberation of the whole country «the revolution in its earliest stages had only in the main the character of a bourgeois democratic revolution and not until later would it gradually develop into a socialist revolution[1].

We give this in full because in India there are people who believe in the Chinese path to victory of the revolution and use the term ‘New Democracy’ or ‘People’s Democratic Dictatorship’ but are unable to relate these to the words ‘Proletarian Socialist Revolution’. We have spoken enough about ‘Proletarian Democracy’ so we can start to check how the Chinese Revolution introduced democracy, given the background that the previous Kuomintang regime under Chiang Kai Shek, forcibly suppressed almost all democratic rights. Also, before everything a note should be taken of the fact that Stalin who had suppressed Soviet democracy in the USSR was opposed to the victory of the Chinese Revolution and we will just give two quotations, one each from Mao Ze Dong and Zou en Lai in support of our claim,

Then Khrushchev came to China and at our Tenth Anniversary Celebration banquet in October, he attacked us on our own rostrum. At the Bucharest Conference in 1960 they tried to encircle and annihilate us. Then came the conference of the Two Communist Parties, the Twenty-six-Country Drafting Committee, the Eighty-one-Country Moscow Conference, and there was also a Warsaw Conference, all of which were concerned with the dispute between

Marxism-Leninism and revisionism. We spent the whole of 1960 fighting Khrushchev. So you see that among socialist countries and within Marxism-Leninism a question like this could emerge. But in fact its roots lie deep in the past, in things which happened very long ago. They did not permit China to make revolution: that was in 1945. Stalin wanted to prevent China from making revolution, saying that we should not have a civil war and should cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek, otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. But we did not do what he said. The revolution was victorious. After the victory of the revolution he next suspected China of being a Yugoslavia, and that I would become a second Tito. Later when I went to Moscow to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance, we had to go through another struggle. He was not willing to sign a treaty. After two months of negotiation he at last signed[2].

When examining the experience of the Communist International, we should take an all-round view. Stalin was in charge for a long time, and there were many shortcomings and mistakes. But not everything during his period was wrong. Even in the second period of the International during Stalin's late years, he did more to encourage than to discourage revolutionary movements. When we held our ground, he could still accept our views and implicitly acknowledge his mistakes. Once his doubts proved to be misplaced, he was willing to change his mind. For instance, he doubted if we were genuine Marxists and if we wanted to oppose the imperialists, but he changed his views at the time of the Korean war.²⁶ So Stalin was reasonable. It is true that he erred on the question of the Chinese revolution, but the Chinese comrades should take

greater responsibility for the mistakes made in that revolution, because we were the decisive factor.[3]

Before everything, one should note the difference in the tone of their assessments of Stalin's counter revolutionary advice with respect to China by the two authors. Mao is more direct and speaking closer to the truth. But Zhou is evasive and so the CCP document quoted by us in Chapter four earlier which states that "Stalin remained a great Marxist Leninist" may not be fully Maoist in its origin and the present day Maoist defenders of Stalin must take note of this fact. Now one can easily correlate these two motives (suppression of democracy at home and the defeat of the Chinese Revolution) of Stalin who was gravely afraid that any victory of the proletarian revolution not directly under his control in a foreign territory, might induce the workers within his own territory to actively engage in politics and spell the doom of his own regime. It is unfortunate that the Chinese, Yugoslav or later the Cuban leadership had not made any attempt to scientifically analyse the nature of the Soviet State as they each got some material incentive from the USSR at the beginning in the immediate aftermath of their own revolutions. Trotsky, one of the important leaders of the October Revolution, whose name Stalin tried to unsuccessfully erase from history, who stood against the nefarious activities of the undemocratic leaders of the post Lenin Soviet State, also stood in defence of revolutionary China from the very beginning.

Thus, given this link to the Stalinist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the fact that it lacked democracy, it is to be expected that the post-revolutionary regime in China along with its people will also be compromised on democracy to a large extent. However, this compromise never reached the monstrous proportions of the Russian case where public executions of the top Soviet bureaucrats was not uncommon even in the 1980s. To see the reality we quote Mao again,

On page 334 the book says, “the proletarian state can take various forms.” True enough, but there is not much difference essentially between the proletarian dictatorship in the people’s democracies and the one established in Russia after the October Revolution. Also, the soviets of the Soviet Union and our own people’s congresses were both representative assemblies, different in name only. In China the people’s congresses included those participating as representatives of the bourgeoisie, representatives who had split off from the Nationalist Party, and representatives who were prominent democratic figures. All of them accepted the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. One group among these tried to stir up trouble, but failed. [6] Such an inclusive form may appear different from the soviet, but it should be remembered that after the October Revolution the soviets included representatives of the Menshevik rightist Social Revolutionary Party, a Trotskyite faction, a Bukharin faction, a Zinoviev faction, and so forth. Nominally representatives of the workers and peasants, they were virtual representatives of the bourgeoisie. The period after the October Revolution was a time when the proletariat accepted a large number of personnel from the Kerensky government -- all of whom were bourgeois elements. Our own central people’s government was set up on the foundation of the North China People’s Government. All members of the various departments were from the base areas, and the majority of the mainstay cadres were Communist Party members.[4]

It can be very easily noted that there was freedom of bourgeois parties initially, a matter as we have seen earlier was troubling Lenin’s mind (see our third chapter above) in 1919. However, we do not agree that the Peoples’ Congresses were like

Soviets, although we have not been able to make a comparison between the 1918 Russian Constitution and the Constitution of the Chinese Peoples' Republic. The very mention of the acceptance of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in the quotation above should cast doubt on the democratic content of the processes that were actually taking place. That is, the question 'is there a possibility of transfer of Governmental functions from one party to another?' is likely to be answered in the negative. Also to be noted is the fact that the Stalinist conception of political economy falsifies the Leninist notion of democracy in relation to the proletarian state, a fact that we discussed in Chapter 4 above in some detail but has not been adequately treated by Mao.

Nevertheless, Mao was very careful to distance himself from the extreme undemocratic practices of Stalin.

On the question of heavy industry, light industry, and agriculture, the Soviet Union did not lay enough emphasis on the latter two and had losses as a result. In addition, they did not do a good job of combining the immediate and the long-term interests of the people. In the main they walked on one leg. Comparing the planning, which of us after all had the better adapted "planned proportionate development?" Another point: Stalin emphasized only technology, technical cadre. He wanted nothing but technology, nothing but cadre; no politics, no masses. This too is walking on one leg![5]

Also it is to be noted that in China there were some prominent bourgeois figures like Sun Yat Sen's widow, Sun Ching Ling, who held important positions in the Chinese State Machine even after all parties other than that of the Communists were outlawed.

Thus, all indicators show that there was some democracy

in the initial years of the revolution marking a break with the Bonapartist Kuo Min Tang regime and this developed through to the 'Cultural Revolution' years at least up to the early 1970s. Even the mass mobilisations of 1986 and 1989 are an indicator that Mao encouraged some mass movements and this created enthusiastic response from the people to come on to the streets later on when a call by the organisers to do so was given. The last such mobilisation took place as late as 2022 against Covid restrictions. On the other hand, in Russia, Stalin's violent suppression of democracy had a negative impact on the people, and they were reluctant to come out and hold protest meetings even after the introduction of Glasnost. Hence, no working class mobilisation to stop the plunder of State property took place at the beginning of the 1990s. Here are a few quotations from Mao which seem to support mass mobilisation during his rule.

Several years ago, an airfield was to be built somewhere in Honan Province, but no proper arrangements were made beforehand for the peasants living there nor any adequate explanations offered them when they were compelled to move out. The peasants of the village affected said, even the birds will make a few squawks if you go poking with your pole at their nest in a tree and try to bring it down. Teng Hsiao-ping, you, too, have a nest, and if I destroyed it, wouldn't you make a few squawks? So the local people set up three lines of defence: the first line was composed of children, the second of women, and the third of able-bodied young men. All who went there to do the surveying were driven away and the peasants won out in the end. Later, when satisfactory explanations were given and arrangements made, they agreed to move and the airfield was built. There are quite a few similar cases. Now there are people who seem to think that,

as state power has been won, they can sleep soundly without any worry and play the tyrant at will. The masses will oppose such persons, throw stones at them and strike at them with their hoes, which will, I think, serve them right and will please me immensely. Moreover, sometimes to fight is the only way to solve a problem. The Communist Party needs to learn a lesson. Whenever students and workers take to the streets, you comrades should regard it as a good thing. There were over a hundred students from Chengtu who wanted to come to Peking to present a petition, but those in one train were halted at the Kuangyuan station in Szechuan Province, while those in another train got as far as Loyang but failed to reach Peking. It is my opinion and Premier Chou's too that the students should have been allowed to come to Peking and call on the departments concerned. The workers should be allowed to go on strike and the masses to hold demonstrations. Processions and demonstrations are provided for in our Constitution. In the future when the Constitution is revised, I suggest that the freedom to strike be added, so that the workers shall be allowed to go on strike. This will help resolve the contradictions between the state and the factory director on the one hand and the masses of workers on the other. After all they are nothing but contradictions. The world is full of contradictions. The democratic revolution resolved the set of contradictions with imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. At present, when the contradictions with national capitalism and small production with respect to ownership have been basically resolved, contradictions in other respects have come to the fore, and new contradictions have arisen. There are several hundred thousand cadres at

the level of the county Party committee and above who hold the destiny of the country in their hands. If they fail to do a good job, alienate themselves from the masses and do not live plainly and work hard, the workers, peasants and students will have good reason to disapprove of them. We must watch out lest we foster the bureaucratic style of work and grow into an aristocratic stratum divorced from the people. The masses will have good reason to remove from office whoever practices bureaucracy, makes no effort to solve their problems, scolds them, tyrannizes over them and never tries to make amends. I say it is fine to remove such fellows, and they ought to be removed.[6]

But it seems that our decisions are welcomed by the masses. For example one of the important decisions of the Central Committee concerns the Great Cultural Revolution. The broad masses of students and revolutionary teachers support us and resist the policies of the past. Our decision was based on their resistance to past policies. But whether this decision can be implemented will ultimately depend on the action of leaders at all levels, including those present today and those who are not. Take for example the question of reliance on the masses. One way is to implement the mass line. Another way is not to implement the mass line. It must by no means be taken for granted that everything which is written down in our resolutions will be implemented by all our Party committees and all our comrades. There will always be some who are unwilling to do so. Things are perhaps better than in the past, since in the past we had no such publicly taken decisions. Furthermore, there are organizational guarantees for the implementation of these decisions. This time our organization has undergone some

changes. The adjustments in the full and alternate membership of the Politburo, in the Secretariat and in the membership of the Standing Committee have guaranteed the implementation of the Decision and Communiqué of the Central Committee.

Comrades who have made mistakes should always be offered a way out. They should be allowed to correct their mistakes. You should not first take the view that they have made mistakes and then deny them the chance to correct them. Our policy is 'punish first offences to avoid their recurrence and cure the disease to save the patient', 'first watch and then help', and 'unity-criticism-unity'. Do we have a party outside our Party? I think that we do, and that we have factions inside the Party. We used to criticize the Kuomintang, who said: 'No party outside the Party and no factions inside the Party.' Some people put it, 'No party outside the Party is autocracy; no factions inside the Party is nonsense.' The same applies to us. You may say that there are no factions in our Party, but there are. For instance, there are two factions as regards attitude toward the mass movements. It is just a question of which faction is the majority and which is the minority.[7]

Both quotations indicate that whatever pro mass orientation or support for their demands materialised in a faction of the Chinese Communist Party, it was under pressure from the mass movements and not as a matter of principle of democracy as is inherent in Marxism-Leninism. In a proletarian democracy, the masses have the full right of holding meetings and demonstrations with or without the help of any faction or factions of a number of political parties that are recognised as 'Soviet Parties' and they can even obtain their demands without resorting to such actions if they can muster support

in the Soviet apparatus to modify the budget for example. For this purpose, they have the freedom to build a new political party if the old ones are not receptive to their demands. Before leaving the discussion on these quotations it is worthwhile mentioning that Mao says in the quotation number 6 above that Deng Ziao Ping had a nest and this brings to our mind the existence (or at least the possibility of existence) of a similar nest of Stalin and of other leaders in the USSR. The very fact that Stalin's daughter Svetlana Alliluyeva, later on called Lana Peters, fell in love with a communist leader from India and on accompanying him to that country, immediately contacted the US embassy seeking entry there, speaks volumes on the bourgeoisification of Stalin's nest.

Since the cultural revolution is presented by many who call themselves 'Maoist' to be an exemplary practice of mass initiative and hence possibility of that of a wider democracy we have to make a long discussion on this phase of the Chinese revolution. Literature is in short supply and so we have to rely on sources who identify themselves with 'Trotskyism'. First, we quote almost completely from an article where Mao spells out his conception of bureaucracy

1. At the highest level there is very little knowledge; they do not understand the opinion of the masses; they do not investigate and study; they do not grasp specific policies; they do not conduct political and ideological work; they are divorced from reality, from the masses, and from the leadership of the party; they always issue orders, and the orders are usually wrong, they certainly mislead the country and the people; at the least they obstruct the consistent adherence to the party line and policies; and they cannot meet with the people.
2. They are conceited, complacent, and they aimlessly discuss politics. They do not grasp their work, they

are subjective and one-sided; they are careless; they do not listen to people; they are truculent and arbitrary; they force orders; they do not care about reality; they maintain blind control. This is authoritarian bureaucracy.

3. They are very busy from morning until evening, they labour the whole year long; they do not examine people and they do not investigate matters; they do not study policies; they do not rely upon the masses; they do not prepare their statements; they do not plan their work. This is brainless, misdirected bureaucracy. In other words, it is routinism.
4. Their bureaucratic attitude is immense; they cannot have any direction; they are egoistic; they beat their gongs to blaze the way; they cause people to become afraid just by looking at them; they repeatedly hurl all kinds of abuse at people; their work style is crude; they do not treat people equally. This is the bureaucracy of the overlords.
5. They are ignorant; they are ashamed to ask anything; they exaggerate and they lie; they are very false; they attribute errors to people; they attribute merit to themselves; they swindle the central government; they deceive those above them and fool those below them; they conceal faults and gloss over wrongs. This is the dishonest bureaucracy.
6. They do not understand politics; they do not do their work; they push things off onto others; they do not meet their responsibilities; they haggle; they put things off; they are insensitive; they lose their alertness. This is the irresponsible bureaucracy.
7. They are negligent about things; they subsist as best

they can; they do not have anything to do with people; they always make mistakes; they offer themselves respectfully to those above them and are idle towards those below them; they are careful in every respect; they are eight-sided and slippery as eels. This is the bureaucracy of those who work as officials and barely make a living.

8. They do not completely learn politics; they do not advance in their work; their manner of speech is tasteless; they have no direction in their leadership; they neglect the duties of their office while taking the pay; they make up things for the sake of appearances. The idlers [e.g., landlord] do not begin any matters, but concentrate mainly upon their idleness; those who work hard, are virtuous, and do not act like the officials are treated poorly. This is the deceitful, talentless bureaucracy.
9. They are stupid; they are confused; they do not have a mind of their own; they are rotten sensualists; they glut themselves for days on end; they are not diligent at all, they are inconstant and they are ignorant. This is the stupid, useless bureaucracy.
10. They want others to read documents; the others read and they sleep; they criticize without looking at things; they criticize mistakes and blame people; they have nothing to do with mistakes; they do not discuss things; they push things aside and ignore it; they are yes men to those above them; they pretend to understand those below them, when they do not; they gesticulate; and they harbour disagreements with those on their same level. This is the lazy bureaucracy.
11. Government offices grow bigger and bigger; things are more confused; there are more people than there are

jobs; they go around in circles; they quarrel and bicker; people are disinclined to do extra things; they do not fulfil their specific duties. This is the bureaucracy of government offices.

12. Documents are numerous; there is red tape; instructions proliferate; there are numerous unread reports that are not criticized; many tables and schedules are drawn up and are not used; meetings are numerous and nothing is passed on; and there are many close associations but nothing is learned. This is the bureaucracy of red tape and formalism.
13. They seek pleasure and fear hardships; they engage in back door deals; one person becomes an official and the entire family benefits; one person reaches nirvana and all his close associates rise up to heaven; there are parties and gifts are presented. . . This is the bureaucracy for the exceptional.
14. The greater an official becomes, the worse his temperament gets; his demands for supporting himself become higher and higher; his home and its furnishings become more and more luxurious; and his access to things becomes better and better. The upper strata gets the larger share while the lower gets high prices; there is extravagance and waste; the upper and lower and the left and right raise their hands. This is the bureaucracy of putting on official airs.
15. They are egotistical; they satisfy private ends by public means; there is embezzlement and speculation; the more they devour, the more they want; and they never step back or give in. This is egotistical bureaucracy.
16. They fight among themselves for power and money; they extend their hands into the Party; they want fame

and fortune; they want positions and, if they do not get them, they are not satisfied; they choose to be fat and to be lean; they pay a great deal of attention to wages; they are cosy when it comes to their comrades but they care nothing about the masses. This is the bureaucracy that is fighting for power and money.

17. A plural leadership cannot be harmoniously united; they exert themselves in many directions, and their work is in a state of chaos; they try to crowd each other out; the top is divorced from the bottom and there is no centralization, nor is there any democracy. This is the disunited bureaucracy.
18. There is no organization; they employ personal friends; they engage in factionalism; they maintain feudal relationships; they form cliques to further their own private interest; they protect each other, the individual stands above everything else; these petty officials harm the masses. This is sectarian bureaucracy.
19. Their revolutionary will is weak; their politics has degenerated and changed its character; they act as if they are highly qualified; they put on official airs; they do not exercise their minds or their hands. They eat their fill every day; they easily avoid hard work; they call a doctor when they are not sick; they go on excursions to the mountains and to the seashore; they do things superficially; they worry about their individual interests, but they do not worry whatsoever about the national interest. This is degenerate bureaucracy.
20. They promote erroneous tendencies and a spirit of reaction; they connive with bad persons and tolerate bad situations; they engage in villainy and transgress the law; they engage in speculation; they are a threat to the Party and the state; they suppress democracy; they

fight and take revenge, they violate laws and regulations; they protect the bad; they do not differentiate between the enemy and ourselves. This is the bureaucracy of erroneous tendencies and reaction.[8]

In points number 9, 13 – 16 and 18 – 20, there is a clear indication that a section of the bureaucracy not connected in any way to productive activities of the society is receiving many disproportionate material benefits. This is in direct contrast to Lenin's principle, which we have outlined in Chapter 1: All state functionaries are to get no more than the wages of a skilled worker. The reason for Mao's silence on this point is difficult to understand as he must have read 'State and Revolution' thoroughly and hence should have mentioned a time frame in which to achieve this goal if it was not possible to achieve it immediately for some particular reason in China in 1970. Without this there will be no socialism. Also to be noted are point numbers 1, 2 and 6 which discuss the bureaucrats' understanding of politics. They aimlessly discuss politics while not understanding it and they are in the party without adhering to its line and policies and these are likely to cause harm to the party, while as is admitted by Mao himself it does not benefit the masses in any way. The best way out of this problem is to purge the party of these elements while maintaining the state apparatus as clearly outlined by Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in its eighth congress and quoted by us in Chapter 1 and raise the cultural level of the masses to take away the administration from the hands of the bureaucrats over a period of time. In the interim, the bureaucrats may be allowed to join an opposition party of their choice to keep them from corrupting the communist party and hence a multi-party system is the only way out during this period of transition to communism.

We start by quoting from the 'Trotskyist' website [9]. All the quotes below are from this site.

The Great Leap Forward (1958-61) was a calamitous economic experiment imposed from above to force the pace of industrialisation in what was still an extremely poor, mainly peasant-based economy. Mao's stated aim was to catch up with Britain and eventually overtake the USA. In fact, the main rivalry was with the USSR. Two superpowers had emerged from the second world war resting on antagonistic social systems – the Soviet Union and US imperialism. This was the main global divide, but divisions and tensions existed within each camp. Genuine workers' states would have prioritised economic cooperation with each other at an international level, but both the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies were motivated by a desire to defend and secure their own privileges, power and prestige, thus sowing the seeds of future conflict. (The first paragraph of the section Sino-Soviet Relations).

Here the point that should be understood is that in the USSR, the bureaucracy was already a hardened caste beyond reform and needed mass action for its overthrow but in China it was just forming and could be checked if there was a correct adherence to the Marxist Leninist method. Mao had indicated that the Soviet bureaucrats who interacted with their Chinese counterparts tried to induce corrupt practices in them. A second quotation from the same website (The section Economic Catastrophy) is –

The central bureaucracy set arbitrary targets for grain production to feed the cities that had no relation to what the peasants were capable of producing. Provincial and local bureaucrats then falsified and exaggerated harvests in order to be seen to reach the targets, resulting in the requisitioning of almost everything the peasants produced and leaving them to starve to

death in their millions. At the same time, the Chinese regime was exporting grain and foodstuffs in order to buy industrial and military technology, and gifting food to allies and potential allies internationally such as the Indochina countries and Algeria. Mao's attempt to forcibly overcome the low level of productive forces was an unmitigated disaster. Rather than creating an economic miracle, the Great Leap Forward ended in mass starvation, economic chaos, environmental destruction and a catastrophic waste of resources and labour.

This is a huge error of an immature bureaucracy and is in contrast to the error of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR in the late 1920s of forced collectivisation induced by a revolt of the Kulaks. Regarding the Cultural Revolution we have this third quotation from the same article (Section Cultural Revolution Begins) –

In order to mobilise the masses Mao's rhetoric attacked 'capitalist roaders', 'class enemies', 'revisionists', and 'counterrevolutionaries', implying that the Liu wing of the bureaucracy, and the very minor material concessions to the peasantry introduced after the Great Leap Forward, represented a potential restoration of capitalist relations. Calls to 'destroy the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes' unleashed pent-up frustrations with the bureaucracy – the privileges, the oppression, the lack of democracy – as well as economic grievances, and millions rallied to support Mao's 'revolution'.

The aim should be to utilise this mass mobilisation to give birth to genuine proletarian democracy of the Paris Commune type where all state functionaries should be elected and subject to recall. Only then a class less ecofriendly social order can be

started to be constructive. The following quotation and this is the last one we present as it becomes too heavy for the reader shows that the Chinese working class did not have a clearly thought out course of action with an aim in its political struggle (Section: Cracking Down).

At the beginning of the 'revolution' the workers in the factories had been urged not to join in the movement but to concentrate their energies on production. But after bureaucrats opposing the Maoists began to make economic concessions to the workers in the form of higher wages and better conditions to win their support, in December 1966 Mao urged 'rebel' workers to join in, as long as they didn't abandon production. Peasant organisations were also created. As Roderick MacFarquar explains in *Mao's Last Revolution*, this opened up a Pandora's Box as workers, many of them on temporary contracts, took advantage of the situation to promote their own economic and political demands. These included elements of direct democracy, especially in Shanghai, which didn't just challenge the excessive privileges of the bureaucracy but brought into question the entire bureaucratic regime.

Notwithstanding Mao's declarations of 'faith in the masses' and calls for them to 'liberate themselves', the last thing that any of the factions of the bureaucracy wanted was a genuine independent mass movement, with demands for workers' democracy, that could become a threat to their rule. The movement that Mao had instigated and manipulated from above was getting out of control and taking on a life of its own. The country was in chaos, with civil war-like conditions as rival organisations and factions of Red

Guards and workers fought each other, including with arms, and followed Mao's exhortation to 'seize power'.

However, as we have stated, since there is a paucity of information, we call on the reader to correct us on this phase of the Chinese Revolution.

Footnotes on Chapter 5

1. Mao Tse Tung. *A critique of Soviet Economics*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1977, pp40.
2. Mao Tse Tung, *Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee*, 24th September 1962. Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_63.htm
3. Zhou En Lai, *Communist International and Chinese Communist Party*, Selected Works of Zhou En Lai, Vol 2, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1989. Pp 308.
4. Mao Tse Tung, *op cit*, pp 42-43
5. Mao Tse Tung, *op cit*, pp 129
6. Mao Tse Tung, *Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee*, 15th November 1956 https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_56.htm
7. Mao Tse Tung, *Speech at the Closing Ceremony of the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee*, 12th August 1966 https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_64.htm

8. Mao Tse Tung, *Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy*, February 1970, Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_85.htm
9. *What Lay behind Mao's Cultural Revolution*, <https://www.socialistworld.net/2023/08/23/what-lay-behind-maos-cultural-revolution/>

Chapter 6

The Problems of Actualising Democracy in the Current Context

The Russian Revolution took place in a country which was still largely feudal with a small capitalist industrial sector and ruled by an oppressive monarch that had its own context which has been detailed in the earlier chapters. The current context is very different as now globally and in India capitalism is dominant and bourgeois parliamentary democracy prevails. Following the Russian Revolution and the market crash of the late 1920s it became clear to the capitalists that state regulated capitalism with a considerable redistribution of by the bourgeois State of the surplus extracted by capitalists would be necessary to stabilise capitalism. Moreover, working class organisation was able to reduce the working hours and improve the wages and thus limited surplus extraction somewhat in the capitalist centres, especially after the second world war. However, from the 1980s technological development has made it possible to outsource manufacturing and services and thus atomise the proletariat and prevent its organisation. This has led to not only a greater extraction of surplus from the workers but also a reduction in the redistribution of income by the State through various welfare measures. In this connection it would be helpful to revisit the concept of primitive accumulation and see how it applies to the present situation.

According to Marx, primitive accumulation or previous accumulation in the words of Adam Smith was the accumulation

that took place before the capitalist mode of production and is its starting point. Smith and other classical economists said it was a peaceful process wherein some workers through their hard work accumulated this previous capital. Marx lampoons this false description of primitive accumulation as follows [1] –

In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living... Thus, it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this ... dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in the defence of property.

Marx then goes on to critique this and say [2] –

In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part. In the tender annals of Political Economy, the idyllic reigns from time immemorial. Right and “labour” were from all time the sole means of enrichment ... As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic.... In themselves money and commodities are no more capital than are the means of production and of subsistence. They want transforming into capital. But this transformation itself can only take place under certain circumstances that centre in this, viz., that two very different kinds of commodity-possessors must come face to face and into contact; on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means

of subsistence, who are eager to increase the sum of values they possess, by buying other people's labour power; on the other hand, free labourers, the sellers of their own labour power, and therefore the sellers of labour. Free labourers, in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, &c., nor do the means of production belong to them, as in the case of peasant-proprietors; they are, therefore, free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own. With this polarization of the market for commodities, the fundamental conditions of capitalist production are given. The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labour. As soon as capitalist production is once on its own legs, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a continually extending scale.

The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as primitive, because it forms the prehistoric stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it.

Marx contended with evidence that peasants were driven off the land, on which they were serfs or petty producers and even the commons were enclosed, through extra-economic

means such as arbitrary violence and laws enacted by the state. However, Marx himself said that while this was at that time a one-off process in England, it was not so in the colonies where petty agricultural producers continued to be there in large numbers providing rent to the colonisers, who sent the surplus so extracted back to the imperialist countries for expansion of capitalist production there.[3]

Rosa Luxemburg, too, argued that the existence of a non-capitalist space was necessary for the realization of the surplus component of the value of a capitalist commodity as well as for primitive accumulation from exploitation of labour and natural resources from the colonial periphery for the continuance of capitalist development as capitalism internally would not be stable [4] –

Moreover, capitalist production, by its very nature, cannot be restricted to such means of production as are produced by capitalist methods. Cheap elements of constant capital are essential to the individual capitalist who strives to increase his rate of profit. In addition, the very condition of continuous improvements in labour productivity as the most important method of increasing the rate of surplus value, is unrestricted utilisation of all substances and facilities afforded by nature and soil. To tolerate any restriction in this respect would be contrary to the very essence of capital, its whole mode of existence. After many centuries of development, the capitalist mode of production still constitutes only a fragment of total world production. Even in the small Continent of Europe, where it now chiefly prevails, it has not yet succeeded in dominating entire branches of production, such as peasant agriculture and the independent handicrafts; the same holds true, further, for large parts of North America

and for a number of regions in the other continents. In general, capitalist production has hitherto been confined mainly to the countries in the temperate zone, whilst it made comparatively little progress in the East, for instance, and the South. Thus, if it were dependent exclusively, on elements of production obtainable within such narrow limits, its present level and indeed, its development in general would have been impossible. From the very beginning, the forms and laws of capitalist production aim to comprise the entire globe as a store of productive forces. Capital, impelled to appropriate productive forces for purposes of exploitation, ransacks the whole world, it procures its means of production from all corners of the earth, seizing them, if necessary by force, from all levels of civilisation and from all forms of society. The problem of the material elements of capitalist accumulation, far from being solved by the material form of the surplus value that has been produced, takes on quite a different aspect. It becomes necessary for capital progressively to dispose ever more fully of the whole globe, to acquire an unlimited choice of means of production, with regard to both quality and quantity, so as to find productive employment for the surplus value it has realised.

Later, Louis Althusser argued that primitive accumulation has been an integral part of capitalism because even after capitalism was well established in Europe and America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it continued to extract surpluses by extra-economic means from the colonies and later the nominally independent nations of the post World War II era [5].

The onset of the neo-liberal era from the 1990s onwards, led on the one hand to a withdrawal of welfare benefits and union

rights which had been gained by the working class through hard fought battles in the industrialised capitalist countries of the West and a dismantling of the socialist apparatuses of the USSR, China and Eastern Europe on the other. Many Marxist theorists argued that this was a revival of primitive accumulation within the capitalist system since it involved the exclusion of a vast number of people from the social commons which provided free education, health and unemployment benefits combined with the squeezing of wages through outsourcing of jobs and the handing over of public enterprises to private capital [6], [7]. Moreover, tax breaks and subsidies were given to corporations which led to their increasing profits further and reducing the funds available for maintaining the socio-economic commons. The huge dominance of finance capital globally and the use of international financial organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to impose cuts in public welfare spending in the developing countries and the transfer of the surpluses from them to the banks of the developed countries through debt and interest repayment were also considered to be extra-economic dispossession of the people of those countries and so a form of primitive accumulation.

This analysis has been cogently extended by Prabhat Patnaik to the case of India since the 1990s when neo-liberal policies were introduced in this country. Patnaik writes [8] –

The neo-liberal regime, has increased the tendency to inflict primitive accumulation upon third world petty producers. In the name of free trade, this sector, and above all peasant agriculture, is now exposed to world market fluctuations, which bring ruin to large sections of the peasantry. In the name of bringing about fiscal rectification, input subsidies to this sector, including cheap credit, are withdrawn. International agri-business and domestic big capitalists are able to squeeze the peasantry.

The second way in which primitive accumulation is carried out is in the name of 'development' itself, peasant lands are taken over for a 'song' for industrial and infrastructural projects. Not only is the peasantry, that legally owned this land, squeezed in the process, but also the entire group of tenants and agricultural labourers whose rights on the land are not even recognized when such take-over of land occurs.

The third way of primitive accumulation is increasing the tax-burden on petty production. Take the case of the uniform Goods and Services Tax, under which, all products are taxed, including the products of the petty producers that had not been taxed earlier, on a par with the products of big capitalists. This has, needless to say, the effect of squeezing this sector.

The fourth mechanism of primitive accumulation is through the privatization of essential services like education and health that the neo-liberal regime effects, which raises the prices of these services. Since the new service providers belong to the capitalist sector, such a rise in price is analytically analogous to a rise in the 'degree of monopoly' [9], which clearly has the effect of compressing the real income of the petty production sector and of the workers of the capitalist sector itself.

Patnaik, however, does not mention above the most important means of primitive accumulation, that of non-payment of statutory minimum wages due to extra economic pressure exerted on the workers, leading to huge extraction of surplus value. This is even more of a problem in India than in the developed countries because the statutory minimum wages are themselves very low in most states in this country (The statutory minimum wage is 15 Purchasing Power Parity

dollars a day on an average in India as opposed to 120 PPP dollars per day in the USA). Marx showed that the exchange value of goods and services produced, depended on the socially necessary labour time required to produce them [10]. This social determination of labour time is not simply a function of supply and demand but is also dependent on negotiation between the working class and the capitalists. Thus, over time the proportion of the value created that would be given to the workers in the form of better wages and working conditions, was decided by contestation through trade unions between the workers and capitalists and increasing workers' power resulted in the State also legislating to provide for regulation of the capitalists. Consequently, the absence of unionisation in the large informal sector or the roll-back of unionisation from the formal sector as has happened since the 1990s all over the world and in India, mean that there is extra-economic extraction of surplus value from workers within the capitalist system and this is a basic feature of primitive accumulation.

The fact is that industrialisation in India has from the beginning been fuelled by primitive accumulation based on cheap labour resulting from state policies to prevent unionisation and keep down wages and through dispossession by displacement [11]. Education, health and employment for the masses have never been provided adequately by the State unlike in the developed countries and so the vast majority have had to remain unskilled, unhealthy and underemployed providing a large industrial reserve army who can be cheaply employed by the capitalists. Attempts by labour to organise and get better wages and working conditions are met with state repression. The most infamous example of this in recent times is the state repression of the workers of the Maruti Suzuki Car factory in Haryana [12]. The State has enabled this exploitation as labour laws have been implemented only for a miniscule proportion of the total workforce that is formally unionised.

Whereas, there were 11124 registered trade unions in India, only 2311 of them filed returns and the total membership of the latter was only 6,181,731 [13]. We can safely assume that those trade unions that are not filing returns are defunct and so given the industrial workforce in India to be about 130 million or about 25 percent of the total work force [14], the effectively organised industrial workforce is just 4.6 percent of the total. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the workforce, being not only unorganised but also prevented from organising, are being paid much less than the statutory minimum wages which are themselves very low.

Moreover, from the time of independence the draconian but now repealed colonial Land Acquisition Act 1894, the Indian Forest Act 1927 and later the post-independence Wildlife Protection Act 1972 have been used to dispossess millions of peasants, especially tribespeople, from their land for development projects like dams, steel plants, mines and industrial areas without adequate compensation or rehabilitation (15).

A major feature of industrialisation in India right from the beginning has been the migration of workers from rural areas to industrial centres. Incipient industrialisation in the nineteenth century attracted migrants from rural areas. In the case of the jute mills of Bengal these were workers mostly from the rural areas in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and also from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh [16]. The cotton mills of Mumbai also had migrant workers from Ratnagiri to the south of the city and from Uttar Pradesh [17]. These workers were men who lived alone and maintained close relations with their families back in the villages. Industrial or other urban jobs gave these migrants an opportunity to supplement meagre family incomes and farm livelihoods but did not result in a permanent transition from rural to urban life. It was only later in the twentieth century

and especially after independence that the migrant workers settled down in cities as industrial growth spurred with greater public investment under the Five Year Plans and the need for permanent skilled labour increased (18).

However, even after independence, matters did not improve much because the nascent capitalist class drew up a plan for economic development of India based on primitive accumulation that is known as the “Bombay Plan” after the industrialists from Bombay who conceived of it (19). This plan envisaged the rapid development of basic infrastructure through heavy state spending garnered from exploitation of the labour of the masses and the vast natural resources. It specifically mentioned that the state must intervene to maintain law and order and restrict individual freedoms given the possibility of dissent from the masses against such a policy and the new independent Government in India followed this path of development which was nothing but unbridled primitive accumulation.

Consequently, the new Indian Constitution adopted in 1949 did not give fundamental rights status to the rights of education, health, employment and local self-governance and instead put them into the section on Directive Principles of State Policy which are non-justiciable. In fact, the Constitution was largely a copy of the colonial Government of India Act of 1935 and mirrored its anti-people provisions. So much so that G.D. Birla the doyen of the Indian capitalists gloated at the time, “We have embodied large portions of the 1935 Act, as finally passed, in the Constitution which we have framed ourselves and which shows that in the 1935 Act was cast the pattern of our future plans” [20]. The Five Year Plans that were implemented from the 1950s, followed the anti-people guidance of the Bombay Plan. So, right from the time of independence people have been displaced from their land and

have been forced into increasing the industrial reserve army, mainly as migrant labour. The state has actively promoted this policy. As a result, the unionisation of labour has always been weak in India and been restricted to a few big private firms, government departments and the public sector enterprises leaving the vast majority of workers at the mercy of primitive accumulation. Unfortunately, the Governments in the states and the centre which are mandated to enumerate the number and type of migrant workers as a part of the regulatory provisions of the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act 1979, do not do so.

Therefore, there are no reliable estimates of migration in India apart from the Census data, which are both suspect and outdated. The Labour Bureau under the Ministry of Labour and Employment is conducting a large sample survey covering 1.2 Lakh households but the results have not been published as yet. According to one estimate there are 140 million migrant workers which amounts to about 27 percent of the total workforce [21]. Assuming that 25 percent of these migrant workers are working in industries, this comes to a fairly large number of 35 million and they are overwhelmingly unorganised. The rest are in agriculture and they are even more difficult to organise.

Globally and in India the scope for mass organisational mobilisation among the workers and peasants has been considerably reduced due to this atomisation of the workforce resulting from the spread of primitive accumulation. Moreover, as per the latest labour force survey as much as 57% of the workforce is self-employed meaning that they are of a petty bourgeois character [22]. A substantial section of the self-employed are small holder farmers who are also casual labourers. Even among those that are employed in jobs only about 5 % are in permanent jobs which allow some kind of unionisation.

Thus, the situation has changed drastically as there is no more a proletariat – a working class that is assured of its jobs and only has to fight for better working conditions and wages initially and for overthrowing the bourgeois order subsequently once it becomes a conscious class for itself through political action. Instead, what exists now is a precariat – a working class that is not assured of employment in addition to suffering from bad working conditions and low wages due to extra-economic pressures. Organisation work requires money which traditionally used to come from the contributions of the workers who were assured of their jobs. However, now with workers not being assured of their jobs and mostly working on contract, not only are they unable to make contributions to their unions but they are also fearful of losing whatever low paying jobs they have by unionising. The new Labour Codes that have been legislated by the Union Government and whose implementation is presently stalled, not only do away with many protections that were there in the earlier laws but in the case of the unorganised sector and migrant workers, leave them high and dry without any social protection [23].

Expectedly Industry associations like Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Conference of Indian Industries (CII) and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM) have welcomed the reforms resulting from the new Labour Codes, since they facilitate industrialists to further casualise the workforce in their factories and reduce the workers' collective bargaining powers and dilute the state's regulatory institutions. The removal of the protective framework of labour rights and entitlements will result in further informalisation of the already small organised workforce in the country and reduce the possibilities of formalisation of the informal workers and especially migrants [24].

There is also the problem of the vast working force in agriculture which as has been shown has both a petty bourgeois and a proletarian character and is effectively a precariat. They are the ones who mostly migrate for work seasonally to the industrial centres. Migrants typically are even more unable to organise to better their working conditions and wages and that is why they are preferred by employers as being easier prey for primitive accumulation.

Globally, a military-industrial-financial complex (MIFC) rules the world. The military industrial complex initially started in the Cold War era of rivalry between the USA and the USSR in the 1950s. However, even after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, localised wars and arms production and sale have increased instead of decreasing and currently there are two such wars going on in Ukraine and Palestine in addition to several local tensions like that between India and China and India and Pakistan. China is now challenging the USA's hegemony of the world in many ways not least in building up a substantial military capability. This complex has now been further bolstered by the financial institutions which use technology to direct money flows across the globe seamlessly. The international institutions under the rubric of the United Nations like the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, are all controlled by the MIFC. The net result is that the governments of small individual countries have little power to direct their own development and so have to follow the dictates of the MIFC. Mostly, the leaders of these small nations are coopted by the MIFC into doing its bidding.

An example of this is the crisis that occurred in Sri Lanka. The country took heavy loans to initiate investment in infrastructure that was export oriented. However, due to the Covid 19 Pandemic in 2020, not only did its export push fail

but the earnings from remittances of its migrant workers and foreign tourists fell drastically completely upsetting its public finances. There was heavy inflation and a shortage of daily wage goods leading to mass unrest which led to its President having to flee the country. However, this did not result in a revolutionary situation because primitive accumulation had precluded the formation of a conscious class for itself that could take advantage of these mass unrests and direct it towards an overthrow of the bourgeois state followed by the establishment of a proletarian state.

Similarly, there has been occasional mass unrest in countries like Chile, Argentina and Brazil in Latin America, but these too have not led to revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state. In fact, the left parties in Latin America have mostly functioned within the contours of bourgeois democracy or have pursued Stalinist State Capitalism as in Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Even in Europe, where there have been mass strikes by workers in France and Spain, eventually, these have subsided on the winning of a few economic demands but have not been able to proceed towards revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois states.

Another problem that has now become very serious is that of ecological destruction. It was there in Marx's time also as was noted by both Marx and Engels –

Even the need for fresh air ceases to be a need for the worker. Man reverts once more to living in a cave, but the cave is now polluted by the mephitic and pestilential breath of civilization. Moreover, the worker has no more than a precarious right to live in it, for it is for him an alien power that can be daily withdrawn and from which, should he fail to *pay*, he can be evicted at any time. . . . Light, air, etc.—the simplest *animal* cleanliness—ceases to be a need for

man. *Dirt*—this pollution and putrefaction of man, the *sewage* (this word is to be understood in its literal sense) of civilization—becomes an *element of life* for him. Universal *unnatural neglect*, putrefied nature, becomes an *element of life* for him. [25]

Natural human waste products . . . are the refuse of consumption. The latter are of the greatest importance for agriculture. But there is a colossal wastage in the capitalist economy in proportion to their actual use. In London, for example, they can do nothing better with the excrement produced by four and a half million people than pollute the Thames with it, at monstrous expense. [26]

All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is progress towards ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility. . . . Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the technique and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker. [27]

Let us not . . . flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. . . . When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the southern slopes, so carefully cherished on the northern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the

roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby depriving their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year, and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons. . . . Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly. [28]

Thus, following Engels' sage advice in the quote above we must learn the laws of nature, and understand that it is finite and has to be exploited with restraint and renewed and so we must include sustainability of resource use in our programmes of democracy. Especially because the threat of climate change due to green house gas emissions is looming large and will lead to serious disruptions of agricultural and industrial production in a few years' time. As one Marxist commentator has noted, capitalism is now faced with a crisis of production which is even more serious than the periodic crises of over production that it faces. [29]

Under the circumstances it is very difficult to initiate mass movements for proletarian democracy leading to an overthrow of the bourgeois system either in India or globally along the lines described in Chapter One earlier. The MIFC controls the global economy too well to allow such movements to gain in strength. Nevertheless, attempts have to be made to build up a class for itself among the oppressed and exploited masses that can take advantage of the disruptions that are bound to arise in future from the crises, both of over production due to lack of

effective demand arising from the immiserisation of the masses through primitive accumulation and of production arising from ecological destruction. A good programme of action in the current context to this end would be as follows –

- Problem analysis workshops in which the people participate in open discussions to pinpoint the problems they face.
- Legal and rights training workshops in which the people are informed about the modern capitalist liberal democratic framework within which they live and the Marxist-Leninist critique of that.
- Collective Action for asserting rights through strikes, public demonstrations and sit-ins leading on to the building of a revolutionary consciousness among the masses.
- Revival of labour and resource pooling customs for implementation of sustainable development.
- Women's meetings to improve their status in society by countering patriarchy and to get them involved in mass action.
- Collective Action at the grassroots in the fields of education, health, child protection, cultural rejuvenation, sustainable agriculture, and workers' and peasants' control of production.
- Legal and policy advocacy to change the laws and rules in favour of the people and broaden bourgeois democracy as a prelude to its revolutionary overthrow.

Footnotes to Chapter 6

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