

THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND THE MARXISTS

by the ISSS Collective

In order to assess the state of the world communist movement and the role of Marxists, it is first necessary to accurately describe that movement. In order to describe the movement, we must have a philosophical framework. That framework is: do ideas (the subjective) spring from a real world (the objective) wherein reality is constantly in formation, maturing or dying away to be replaced by other reality? Or do ideas create reality? To place it crudely, is Rene Descartes "I think therefore I am" correct, or is it correct to say "I am therefore I think." Only then can we answer the question, "does the communist idea create the communist movement, or does the potential or actual communist movement, arising from means of production incompatible with private property, create the communist idea.

Karl Marx was a genius. Genius is often expressed by the ability to visualize where immature tendencies or partial information will lead. Marx and Engels, in 1848 saw the beginnings of the new class, the industrial proletariat. They understood that as the proletariat and the bourgeoisie cleared away the world left by feudal relations they would polarize and begin the "final conflict." Thus they wrote, "The Communists, (members of the Communist Party) therefore, are on the one hand practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement. "The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: Formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

"The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. "They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of communism."

They saw the emerging industrial proletariat as a communist class since the development of giant industry would be incompatible with private ownership. All communist strategy and doctrine was based on this assumption.

All strategy is based on assumption since strategy is about what will happen and not about what is happening. When dealing with entirely new, untested assumptions there is always a margin of error. That error was that the means of production of giant industry were compatible with private ownership and therefore the industrial proletariat was not a communist class.

Here a dichotomy developed. On the one hand the Communist Manifest was a work of genius embraced by outstanding thinkers and revolutionaries around the world. On the other hand an actual, objective communist class had not matured to be the foundation for that brilliant idea. It is interesting to note that Lenin and Stalin never referred to the Russian working class as a communist proletariat. They referred to them as a revolutionary proletariat.

It should be clear that the decline of the communist movement associated with the 3rd International resulted from the inability of that movement, formed around an idea, to create an objective movement with which it could unite. The result was the communist movement became a movement of people who believed in communism rather than "the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority."

We have entered a new era. The moment Marx and Engels spoke of is at hand. Moribund, globalized capitalism has "put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left no other nexus between people than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom -- Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation." At long last, means of production that destroy value and therefore, eventually, capitalism's productive relations are rapidly driving living labor from its market place. As robotics replace labor, it becomes clear that the necessaries of life, which no longer have value, must be distributed according to need. This painful process is creating a communist class - a class that cannot live under existing relations and has no way forward except

the overthrow of the political superstructure, the conquest of political power and establishment of new productive relations compatible with the new means of production.

THE ROLE OF THE MARXIST

Although the aforementioned process is inevitable, it is not automatic. The altering material force is electronics. The altering political force is new ideas, -- visions of a new social order based in the colossal productive capacity of electronics. The development of the material forces is spontaneous. The introduction of new ideas and vision is the result of propaganda by conscious individuals. Changes in the material means of production mean nothing if its significance is not grasp by the masses. Hence the need of an organization of revolutionaries at this stage of revolution.

What then is the role of Marxists today? First, we need to repeat that Communism isn't Marxism. Marxism is the scientific current within the actual communist movement. That movement, like any other, has its objective and subjective sides. That subjective side has many facets. As "Marxists," Marx and Engels spoke to the communists when they wrote:

"In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?"

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only:

(1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.

(2) In the various stages of development, which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

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This is political strategy and theory. This is the Marxist speaking to the communists, The Marxists also have a life of their own. That is a life framed by dialectical materialism and applicable to any inquiry into any aspect of the social or natural development. David Christian's *Maps of Time* is a brilliant example of the application of dialectical materialism to the whole process of universal evolution.

It is time for the "Marxist" to set aside the sectarian ideas they inherited and set about the difficult task of being the scientific teachers of the objective movement, both its objective side as a social movement with the new class at its core, and the subjective side as teachers of the communist political movement, that must inevitably arise from it.