

TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM

INDIA HAS THUS very big hurdles to cross before we can proceed to building socialism in our country.

Those who proceed to draw up neat and tidy plans of a 'socialist pattern for India' while ignoring this reality, and on top of it, accuse communists of being dogmatic or 'borrowing their ideas from Russia', should note this fact.

In essence, what we mean is that powerful mass struggles to break up the stranglehold of foreign and internal monopoly and the landed interests, to dislodge the present ruling class not only from office but from the reality of power, and to create a government whose class composition will guarantee the total defeat of reaction—this entire process is necessary as a condition for our advance to socialism.

But there is another aspect of the question to which we must now turn. And that is this, that while the tasks of the completion of the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution are not identical, and it is wrong and very harmful to confuse the two, this does not mean that there is a Chinese wall between the two.

In actual practice, the struggle for full democracy, for a further strengthening of our national independence, for the improvement of people's living standards, is a component part of the struggle for socialism. It grows over into the struggle for socialism.

And hence the most correct and dynamic way of understanding our anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, anti-landlord, democratic tasks is to grasp them as a transition to socialism.

These tasks are not static. They cannot be mechanically compartmentalised and separated from the advance to socialism. It is not as though the people's struggle has to halt after the completion of the democratic revolution,

take a holiday, and then start a second march to socialism. The struggle is continuous. There is no halting on the way.

There is no guarantee in our epoch of the successful defence of democracy and national independence except by a determined advance to socialism.

It should not be difficult to understand that not all those who will actively participate in the democratic revolution, or at any rate, adopt an attitude of sympathetic neutrality towards it, will subsequently join in the advance to socialism.

The rich peasants and medium industrialists, who have everything to gain by the elimination of foreign and internal monopoly domination and the elimination of big landlordism, would generally resist the advance to socialism.

But, as the Chinese used to say till seven or eight years ago, some of these elements will develop a new socio-cultural and historical outlook by that time ('re-educate themselves', used to be the Chinese phraseology) and agree to actively assist in the advance to socialism. Their younger generation, particularly, will not prefer, after the democratic revolution to live under the stigma of living on profit by the exploitation of labour.

Be that as it may, the working class, the poor and middle peasantry and the overwhelming majority of the middle-class employees and intelligentsia will surely march from the democratic to the socialist revolution with great fervour and enthusiasm. All of them have everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by marching ahead. They will not agree to call a halt to the further development of the revolutionary process.

What will be the picture of socialist India as it will finally emerge? It is not necessary and neither would it be helpful, to work out its details in a schematic manner at the present stage. Every country exhibits certain specific features conditioned by its history and national conditions, in its advance towards socialism and its construction. India will surely have its own particular features.

. However, whatever the pattern and peculiar features of the socialist India to come, it must clearly satisfy certain basic and indispensable requisites.

Under socialism, production cannot be for private profit, the productive labour of society cannot be channelised on considerations dictated by private profit. Production will have to be governed by the requirements of society.

It clearly follows that such a change cannot be effected unless private ownership of the means of production is replaced by their social ownership, control and management. Under socialism, there can be no divorce between the ownership of the means of production and labour. Those who operate the means of production own them, those who own them also operate them.

It follows further that under socialism there can be no personal income arising from the ownership of any means of production. Differences in personal income will be there, but only such as are justified by the social necessity of the physical and intellectual labour put in by the person concerned.

This will need constant calculation but has nothing in common with the vast economic inequalities of the present which arise not from the utility of the work done by a person but from the ownership or lack of ownership of the means of production.

Social ownership does not necessarily mean state ownership though that is the form best suited for modern, mechanised industry. There can be various forms of collective, cooperative ownership in agriculture, small-scale industry, distributive trade at the lower level, and so on.

It also follows that production and distribution in a socialist society have to be centrally planned and an appropriate mechanism created for the execution of the plans from time to time.

Here again, centralised planning and execution, far from overriding the initiative and authority of lower organs of planning and execution, demand them as a requisite for intelligent centralised planning and guidance.

The measure of authority and responsibility vested in the organs of planning and execution from the lowest to the highest level is a matter of historical conditions. There can and must be no rigidity and fixity in the matter.

In the earlier phases of the construction of a socialist society, centralisation of authority and responsibility are naturally greater. With the growth of socialist consciousness and mass experience in planning and management, growing democratisation must follow. Centralisation has to rise to a higher level with the authoritarian and administrative aspect of centralised control being steadily replaced by the aspect of guidance, persuasion and coordination.

The state structure that will build socialism—the legislature, the judiciary, the administration—will obviously be a state of those who work by hand and brain. There can be no place in a socialist state structure for those who live on another's labour.

Such are the essentials of a socialist state and a socialist economy. In India, we will surely have our distinguishing features arising from our history and particular national conditions. But in the name of national peculiarities or exceptionalism, or in the name of 'flexibility' 'avoidance of dogmatism', 'pragmatism', and such other excuses, there can be no watering down of basic essentials.

It is also necessary to understand that the socialist state and socialist economy are at once more centralised and more democratic than the capitalist state and capitalist economy. In political terms, socialist democracy is both more centralised and more democratic than parliamentary democracy.

This may appear a contradiction in terms but is not so in reality. Under capitalist economy, and under parliamentary democracy which is its political counterpart, the conflict between democracy and centralism arises from the basically irreconcilable conflict between labour and capital.

The maximum of popular enthusiasm, initiative and active participation in public affairs, which is the heart and soul of democracy, can be assured under socialism because only

in socialist society those who work are also those who own the means of production.

This general statement should not be interpreted to mean that there are no contradictions in a socialist society. For quite a long time after the establishment of socialist power, conflicts in the immediate interests of the workers and the peasantry, between various sections and strata of the working class itself, between manual and intellectual labour, between town and country etc. do continue.

Vigilance, patience and a consistent struggle against tendencies of bureaucratism and authoritarianism are needed to eliminate such conflicts in the process of time.

The history of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries gives ample proof that the struggle is long and difficult. It is often characterised by serious mistakes and aberrations. But such conflicting interests are in no sense basically irreconcilable. That is why under socialism, centralism and democracy become complementary to each other, strengthen each other, do not negate each other.

It would be helpful to refer to one particular aspect of this question so far as the future structure of socialist India is concerned.

Socialist India would be a federation of linguistic states, with their boundaries determined by contiguity of territory based on a common language. All languages will not only have equal opportunity to develop but will receive full state assistance and encouragement to develop in every sphere of social intercourse. At the level of the central government also, all languages will be equal. The use of Hindi as a language of inter-state communication will be based absolutely on the voluntary consent of all.

Formally, this is the position in present-day India also. Then why does the problem not get solved? Why do linguistic conflicts in our country so often assume the menacing form of Hindi chauvinism on one side and non-Hindi chauvinism on the other?

At root, the conflict arises because of vested interests, capitalist, landed, trading interests, and so on, taking cover

behind chauvinism, whipping up chauvinistic passions as a means of furthering their narrow, anti-social ends. Only under socialism can there be a steady and final solution of the problem.

It is not possible here to go into similar other questions. Besides, it would not help to propose cut and dried solutions of such problems at this stage. There are a number of problems of culture, of national integration, of what our ancient sages used to call unity in diversity.

Only the basic approach to the problems can be stated just now. The experience of socialist construction and the growth of socialist consciousness will enable us to find their concrete solutions suited to our conditions. These solutions will undoubtedly carry forward the progressive features of India's great cultural heritage to still greater heights.

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SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

THERE ARE CERTAIN questions which are invariably raised when we, communists, speak of building socialism. Some of them are very crude, and they arise from the constant and vicious anti-communist propaganda carried on by the press, radio, television, etc. dominated by the money barons in all capitalist countries. However, we can pose them as they are usually formulated. That does not harm us.

Until a quarter of a century ago it used to be necessary for us to deal painstakingly even with such stupidities as the 'nationalisation of women under communism', 'the abolition of the family', 'the abolition of religion,' and so on.

Such propaganda no longer cuts any ice. Crores of people in capitalist world now know for a fact that marriage and family life are far more stable and lasting in the socialist countries than the holy and god-fearing capitalist world.