Chapter 15
The Coming of the Classless Society

1 The socialist goal

Our socialist objective is the replacement of bourgeois society, based on the struggle of all against all, by a classless community in which social solidarity replaces the search for individual wealth as the essential motive for action, and in which the wealth of society assures the harmonious development of all individuals.

Far from wanting 'to make everyone the same', as the ignorant opponents of socialism pretend, Marxists want to allow the development for the first time in human history of the whole infinite range of different possibilities of thought and action present in each individual. But they understand that social and economic equality, the emancipation of humanity from the necessity to fight for its daily bread, represents a precondition for achieving the true realisation of the human personality in all individuals.

A socialist society therefore requires an economy developed to the point where production for need supersedes production for profit. Socialist humanity will no longer produce goods to be exchanged for money on the market. It will produce use values distributed to all members of society in order to satisfy their needs.

Such a society will liberate humanity from the chains of the social and economic division of labour. Marxists reject the thesis according to which certain people 'are born to command' and others 'born to obey'. Nobody is by nature marked out to be a miner, a miller or a bus conductor for the whole of their life. The desire to engage in a certain number of different activities exists in everybody: you only have to see what workers do in their leisure time to understand this. In socialist society the high level of technical and intellectual skills of every citizen will allow them to set about numerous and varied tasks during their life, all useful to the community. The choice of a job will no longer be imposed on people by material forces or conditions independently of their own wishes. It will depend on their own needs, their own individual development.

Work will cease to be an imposed burden one tries to avoid, and will become simply the fulfilment of the personality. Humanity will finally be free in the real sense of the word. Such a society will try to eliminate all the sources of conflict between human beings. The immense resources wasted today in destruction and repression will be turned to the struggle against disease, to the upbringing of children, to education and to the arts. Eliminating all the social and economic antagonisms between people, this society will eliminate all the causes of war and violent conflict. Only the establishment in the entire world of a socialist society can guarantee to humanity the universal peace that is required even for its survival as a species in the epoch of atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons.

2 The economic and social conditions for the attainment of this goal

If we do not limit ourselves to dreaming of a radiant future, if we intend to fight for this future, we must understand that the construction of a socialist society (which will completely overthrow the habits and customs established for thousands of years in class-divided societies) will have to be subordinated to equally staggering material transformations which must first of all be brought about.

The achieving of socialism requires above all the suppression of the private ownership of the means of production. In the epoch of large-scale industry and modern techniques (which one cannot abandon without throwing humanity back into generalised poverty), this private ownership of the means of production inevitably involves the division of society into a minority of capitalists who exploit and a majority of wage-earners who are exploited.

The achieving of socialist society demands the suppression of the wage-earning relationship as such, of the sale of labour
power for a fixed money-wage, which reduces the producer to a powerless cog in economic life. The remuneration of labour through free access to all the goods required to satisfy the needs of the producers should be progressively substituted for the earning of wages. It is only in a society which assures people such an abundance of goods that a new social consciousness, a new attitude between people and towards work, can be born.

Such an abundance of goods is in no way utopian so long as it is gradually introduced, starting from a progressive rationalisation of people's needs once they have been emancipated from poverty, from the constraints of competition, from the race for private enrichment, and from the advertising manipulations which seek to create a permanent state of dissatisfaction in individuals. Thus progress in the standard of living has already created a situation where all but the poorest people in the imperialist countries can eat all they want of bread, potatoes, vegetables, some fruits and even dairy products and pork meat. A similar tendency can be seen with underwear, shoes, basic furniture, etc. — at least in the richest countries. All these products could be progressively distributed free of charge, without making use of money and without adding significantly to collective spending. The same possibility exists for social services such as teaching, health care, public transport, etc.

But the abolition of wage-labour requires not merely the transformation of the conditions of remuneration and of distribution of goods. It also means doing away with the hierarchical structure of the factory and the substitution of a system of producers' democracy for the sole instructions of the boss (assisted by workshop managers, foremen, etc.). The aim of socialism is self-government on all levels of social life, beginning with economic life. It is the replacement of all institutional hierarchies by elected delegates, of all permanent functionaries by delegates who take on these functions in turn. It is in this way that we will be able to establish the conditions for true equality.

Social wealth which allows the creation of a system of plenty can only be achieved through a planned economy which avoids any waste such as the massive non-utilisation of

the means of production or unemployment, as well as their utilisation for ends contrary to humanity's interests. The emancipation of labour remains dependent on the enormous development of modern techniques — productive use of atomic energy (under conditions of maximum security, together with intensive research for alternative sources of energy); electronic and remote control mechanisms which allow the complete automation of production — which liberate humanity more and more from heavy, degrading, soul-destroying and monotonous tasks. Thus history replies in advance to the crude old objection to socialism: 'Who would do the dirty jobs in a socialist society?'

The maximum development of production in the most favourable conditions for humanity will require the maintenance and extension of the international division of labour (profoundly altered, however, in order to bring an end to the 'advanced'/ 'dependent' relationship between countries), the abolition of frontiers, and the planning of the whole of the world economy. The abolition of frontiers and the real unification of the human race is, moreover, also a psychological requirement of socialism, the only means of suppressing economic and social inequality between nations. The abolition of frontiers in no way means the suppression of the cultural identity of each nation; on the contrary, it will permit the assertion of this identity in a more striking fashion than today, and on its own terms.

The management of factories by the workers, of the economy by a congress of workers' councils, of all spheres of social life by the relevant collectivity, also depends upon certain material conditions for its fulfilment. The radical reduction of the working day — in fact, the introduction of the half day at work — is absolutely necessary to give the producers time to manage the factories and the communities, and to prevent the emergence of a new layer of professional administrators.

The generalisation of higher education — and a new distribution of 'study time' and 'work time' across the whole of men and women's adult life — is vital for the gradual disappearance of the separation between manual and
intellectual labour. **Strict equality of remuneration, of representation and of opportunities for obtaining new skills** is necessary to ensure that the inequality between the sexes is not maintained after the disappearance of the inequality between social classes.

3 **The political, ideological, psychological and cultural conditions for the attainment of this goal**

The material conditions for the arrival of a classless society are necessary but not sufficient. Socialism and communism will not be the automatic product of the development of the productive forces, the disappearance of poverty, and the raising of the level of technical and intellectual skills of humanity. It will also be necessary to alter the habits, morals, and ways of thinking which have resulted from thousands of years of exploitation, oppression and social conditions favouring the desire for private enrichment.

Above all, it will be necessary to remove all political power from the dominant classes and to prevent them from getting it back. The general arming of the workers, replacing the permanent armies, and then the progressive destruction of all arms, making it impossible for any partisans of a re-establishment of minority rule to produce these arms, should allow us to achieve this aim.

The democracy of workers' councils; the exercise of all political power by these councils; public control of production and the distribution of wealth; the widest public debate on all matters involving major political and economic decisions; access for all workers to the means of information and all organs of public opinion: all this should ensure once and for all that no return to a regime of oppression and exploitation is any longer possible.

Then it will be a matter of creating suitable conditions for the workers to get used to the new security of their existence and stop measuring their efforts in terms of a specific and expected return. This psychological revolution can only take place when experience has taught people that socialist society can guarantee effectively — and permanently — the satisfaction of all their basic needs, without having to balance this up against each person's contribution to the social wealth.

Free food and basic clothing; public services; health care; education; cultural services — these will allow us to attain this goal after two or three generations have experienced them. Thenceforth work will no longer be considered as a means of 'earning a living' but will become a necessary creative activity through which everyone contributes to the well-being and development of all.

The radical transformation of such structures of oppression as the patriarchal family, the authoritarian school, and the passive consumption of ideas and 'culture' will go hand in hand with these social and political transformations.

The dictatorship of the proletariat will suppress no idea and no scientific, philosophical, religious, literary, cultural or artistic current. It will not be afraid of ideas, having full confidence in the superiority of communist ideas. It will not, for all that, be neutral in the ideological struggle which follows; it will establish all the conditions suitable for the emancipated proletariat to assimilate the best products of the old culture and progressively build the elements of the unified communist culture of future humanity.

The cultural revolution which will set its seal on the construction of communism will mean above all a revolution in the conditions in which humanity creates its culture, the transformation of the mass of people from passive consumers into active cultural producers and creators.

The biggest obstacle which remains to be surmounted in the creation of a communist world is the enormous gap which separates the per capita production and standard of living of inhabitants of the advanced industrial countries from those of the under-developed countries. Marxism decisively rejects the reactionary utopia of an ascetic communism of poverty. The flowering of the economic and social life of the peoples of these regions requires not only the socialist planning of the world economy but also a radical redistribution of material resources in favour of these peoples.

Only a transformation of the egotistical, short-sighted and petty-bourgeois ways of thinking which survive today among important sections of the working class in the West will enable us to achieve this goal. Internationalist education will
have to go hand in hand with the adjustment to abundance, which will show that such a redistribution can take place without leading to a reduction in the living standards of the Western masses.

4 The stages of the classless society

On the basis of the already rich experience of more than a century of proletarian revolution — that is, since the Paris Commune — three stages can be distinguished in the construction of a classless society:

— The stage of transition from capitalism to socialism, the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the survival of capitalism in important countries, of the partial survival of commodity production and the money economy, of the survival of different classes and social layers within the countries involved in this stage, and therefore of the necessary survival of the state to defend the interests of the workers against the partisans of a return to the rule of capital.

— The stage of socialism, whose construction completes and is characterised by the disappearance of social classes (‘socialism is the classless society’, said Lenin), by the withering away of the commodity and money economy, by the withering away of the state, by the international triumph of the new society. However, in the socialist stage the remuneration of everyone (apart, of course, from the free satisfaction of basic needs) will continue to be measured in terms of the quantity of labour given to society.

— The stage of communism, characterised by the complete application of the principle ‘from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs’, by the disappearance of the social division of labour, by the disappearance of the separation of town and country. Humanity will reorganise itself into free communes of producer-consumers, capable of administering themselves without any separate organ for this purpose, at one with a restored natural habitat and protected from any threat of destruction of the ecological balance.

However, in a post-capitalist society where the workers and not a bureaucratic layer hold effective power, there will be no need of revolutions and similar sudden shifts to move from one stage to the next. They will result from the progressive evolution of production and social relations. They will be the expression of the progressive withering away of commodity categories, of money, of social classes, of the state, of the social division of labour, and of the thought processes which resulted from the inequality and social struggles of the past. The main thing is immediately to begin these processes of withering away and not to leave them to future generations.

Such is our communist ideal. It constitutes the only solution to the burning problems with which humanity is confronted. To devote one’s life to its realisation, and therefore to build the Fourth International, is to live up to the intelligence and generosity of the best sons and daughters of our species, the most daring thinkers of the past, the most courageous fighters for the emancipation of labour — from Spartacus leading the Roman slaves’ revolt to those who led the peasant wars against serfdom, from the heroes of the Paris Commune to those of the Red Army, from the milicianos who in July 1936 beat the fascists in Barcelona, Madrid and nearly all the big industrial cities of Spain to the heroic Vietnamese who in a thirty years’ war defeated Japanese, French and American imperialism.