

Chapter VI

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORMS IN THE USSR Reconstruction - Revisionism

Introduction

On the basis of their dialectical study of the laws governing the development of human society, Marx and Engels came to the conclusion that the internal contradictions of bourgeois society would inevitably give birth to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that such dictatorship would lay the necessary foundation for future communist society. In spite of their belief in inevitability of socialism, neither Marx nor Engels were alive to see the overthrow of capitalism in any country. It was only 35 years after Marx's death that proletarian revolution broke out in a backward capitalist country like Russia under the able guidance of the Bolshevik party led by V.I. Lenin. Credit is due to Lenin for enriching Marxism in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolutions and applying it to strengthen the foundations of socialism in that peasant dominated country. Though Lenin did not live long to see the fruits of socialism for many years his rich theoretical insights guided the subsequent development of Russian society. After Lenin, his disciple J.V. Stalin consolidated the socialist base in the U.S.S.R. by undertaking necessary programmes for rapid industrialisation and for collectivisation of agriculture. Under Stalin's leadership Russia became the leader of the international communist movement. Despite heavy casualties that Russia had to suffer during Second World War, it could effectively reconstruct its economy and became a challenger to the U.S.A. just within 35

years after its birth. It not only strengthened its economic and military power but also played a key role in the victory of communists in East Europe and China. Much to the appreciation of many admirers of socialism, by 1950s, almost one third of the world turned socialist. Seeking these developments many people then thought that world socialism was not a mere chimera.

However things dramatically changed after the death of Stalin in 1953. The de-Stalinisation that Khrushchev's regime initiated after the 20th congress of the CPSU created confusions in the world communist movement. Debate over the subsequent policies that Russia initiated since then led to serious discussions in the working class movement. Unable to arrive at a consensus on many major issues the communist block splitted into two groups. Since then, in the absence of an all acceptable international communist authority, each socialist country began to claim itself a true inheritor of Marxism Leninism. As years passed, in addition to changes in alignments of international actors, changes took place in every socialist country. With the change in leadership the official policies also changed. But everytime the policy was changed, the officials did not forget to justify them on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. What is now happening in Russia is not an exception to the trend.

At present, the entire world seems to be carried away by the twin concepts 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost', introduced by the General Secretary of the C.P.S.U, Mikhail Gorbachev. The major social, economic and political reforms that the new leadership initiated in the names of 'reconstruction' and 'openness' started attracting the attention of the scholars interested in understanding the dynamics of socialist regimes. Since this new experiment is also justified on the basis of Leninism, critical evaluation of these reforms becomes necessary to give a correct direction to the socialist development. With that aim, this chapter would first record the official version of the programme of 'Perestroika' and then examine the causes they cite to justify the necessity of implementing perestroika. After this, attempts will be made to evaluate them on the basis of classical Marxist interpretation of the state, civil society and economy in the socialist systems.

Perestroika : Gorbachev's version

What provoked the citizens of U.S.S.R. to think of 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost' after 70 years of socialist experiment? Do they think that what was constructed so far in the name of socialism is not really socialism which Marx, Engels and Lenin dreamt of? Or did the people of U.S.S.R. decide to abandon the path of Marxism-Leninism? Answers to these and other related questions need to be sought by all those who are interested in understanding the nature and dynamics of the state in socialist society.

Before evaluating the recent scenario in the U.S.S.R. one should first examine the official version. In U.S.S.R., none other than the party's General Secretary himself, Mikhail Gorbachev came out in favour of 'Perestroika'. Since he argues that perestroika is not based on the subjective perception of the present leadership, but has its roots in the objective conditions within the Soviet Union, looking at Gorbachev's description of the present Soviet society becomes indispensable. To begin, in his book *Perestroika* Gorbachev writes, "At some stage this became very clear in the latter half of the 70's — some thing happened that was at first sight inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum. Economic failures became more frequent. Difficulties began to accumulate and deteriorate and unresolved problems to multiply. Elements of what we call stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism began to appear in the life of society... we discovered a slowing economic growth. In the last 15 years the income growth rates had declined by more than half and by the beginning of the 80's had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was quickly closing on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another".¹ In this report to the nineteenth All Union Conference of the C.P.S.U. Gorbachev observed, "In the period of stagnation the machinery of management began to decide its will in both the economic and political fields. It was those agencies and other administrative structures that handled the execution of the decisions... The soviet and, in many respects, the party bodies as well, proved unable to control this pressure from departmental interests".² What is worse, many of those who remained in leading posts for years got a false idea of being infallible and irreplaceable. Responsibility declined among a large number of elected persons and in the party apparatus. They lost contact with the party masses and working people which often ended, as we know, in the political and moral degradation.³

If such is the status of economy and administration, what about the people of socialist Russia? See the confessions of Gorbachev, "Decay began in public morals; the great feeling of solidarity with each other that was forged during the heroic times of the Revolution, the first five year plans, the great patriotic war and the post-war rehabilitation was weakening; alcoholism, drug addiction and crime were growing; and the penetration of the stereotypes of mass culture alien to us which bred vulgarity and low tastes and brought about ideological barrenness increased. . . People were losing interest in social affairs, that labour no longer had its respectable status, that people, especially the young, were after profit at all costs".⁴ In addition to the above mentioned social, political and economic phenomena, Gorbachev also talks of technological stagnation, scarcity of consumer goods, wastage of resources and of rampant corruption and bribery in the bureaucratic apparatus in the U.S.S.R. If such is the present status of the first socialist country which showed to the world the unknown potentialities of the rule of the proletariat, then all those who sympathise with the cause of socialism feel the necessity of 'Perestroika' in all aspects of Soviet society. But what is the real content of 'Perestroika' which Gorbachev talks of? Does implementation of the reforms he prescribes really set the things in the right direction? To be able to answer these questions, a brief study of the official version of the reforms is desirable.

Programme of Perestroika : Gorbachev's plan

In order to overcome the malaise in U.S.S.R., Gorbachev proposes 'revolutionary' changes in all aspects of Soviet society. His programme includes many changes in economic, political, scientific, technological, educational and cultural fields. The scope of this book does not permit a comprehensive analysis of all the so-called radical reforms prescribed by the present political leadership. Yet, keeping in view the necessity of understanding the nature and dynamics of the state, classes and economy in the socialist setup a brief sketch of the fundamental economic and political changes initiated by the Gorbachev's 'Perestroika' may be given.

Gorbachev considers the inability of the economy to meet the ever growing demands of the people of the U.S.S.R. society for more consumer and other goods as a serious economic problem. Hence he lays stress on increasing the productive capacity of the socialist economy by

the educational, scientific and technological innovations, Gorbachev stresses on fundamental changes in agriculture and industry. "By intensifying these processes" Gorbachev avers, "We intend to switch over to an economy having higher level of organization and effectiveness, with comprehensively developed productive forces, mature socialist relations of production and a smoothly functioning economic mechanism".⁵

He considers drastic changes in laws relating to agro-industrial complex system as a means to achieve the proposed goals. They include re-introduction of cooperatives in manufacturing and processing of products in gardening and housing construction and also in the sphere of services and trade. To facilitate the changes a law on cooperatives was enacted recently. The present leadership claims that cooperatives did not exhaust their utilities and that they are essential in meeting the ever growing needs of the Russian people. Gorbachev indirectly criticises Stalin for switching over to collective farms at a time when cooperatives did not exhaust their potentialities in contributing to socialist production. As he opines as "a result of departing from Leninist principles of the cooperative movement, the country and its economy have suffered substantial setbacks in political, moral and social terms".⁶ To 'rectify' those mistakes, Gorbachev proclaims that the promotion of "the cooperative movement will open up extensive opportunities for resolving many of society's vitally important problems. *We have imparted to cooperatives the very meaning and the very role which Lenin ascribed them*".⁷ (emphasis mine — author).

Though in his book, *Perestroika*, Gorbachev appreciates the result of collectivisation except for the so-called 'excesses' in his address to the 4th All union congress of collective farmers, he argued that collectivisation did "harm to the agricultural sector". "The ill effects", he cites, include "slow progress in the solution of the food problem, the shortages in and narrow choices of many consumer goods and the limited range of daily services".⁸ To do away with this state of affairs the new law on cooperatives suggests that the structure of the collective farms should be modified to facilitate the rebirth of cooperatives of independent primary work collectives. Gorbachev considered it justified to use all restrictions on their auxiliary business. From now on collective farms will be able to rent out part of the land assigned to them and part of their fixed assets both to other enterprises and to industrial citizens; to set up all kinds of agricultural cooperatives and to conduct foreign economic operation".⁹

In this new system, stress will be given to small farms. The farmer will be made sovereign master. Now the law is so changed that the farmer cannot only rent the land for any number of years, he can also inherit the land to his children. It is contended that such private ownership would inculcate a sense of possessiveness which is essential for augmenting production. In other words, "the reform will not yield the results we expect, if it does not affect the personal interests of literally every person, if it fails to become every person's vital affairs".¹⁰

It is claimed that the cooperative movement would encourage public initiative, supplement the supply of consumer goods and make self management methods possible. Besides, Gorbachev locates an extra argument in favour of cooperative movement. In his words, cooperative movement "is one of the more important levers for broadening the democratic process as a whole, for the struggle against administrative methods and bureaucracy".¹¹ In view of all these practical advantages he considers it as the immediate duty of the soviets and the party organs to lend every support to people interested in joining cooperative movement.

In addition to these reforms pertaining to cooperatives, perestroika entails drastic changes in the structure of industrial sector and labour relations in the state enterprises. To that effect a new 'law on the state enterprises' is enacted. The present regime now stresses on advantages of having small plants and pleads for complete operational autonomy and self-financing methods in all state enterprises. These reforms are justified on the grounds of preventing the production of useless goods combating the command style administration of central government and of creating a sense of responsibility among the workers. Under the new laws, central ministers will be endowed with the responsibility of giving only limited directions. Enterprises and organisations are given autonomy in production of consumer goods and services. They will hereafter enjoy the right to sell in the markets after meeting the contractual agreements. Some of the enterprises are given the rights to establish foreign economic ties directly. One official source says that over 70 enterprises and more than 20 ministries are allowed to have direct outlets to the foreign markets.¹² To facilitate these change laws regarding internal and external trade are changed.

Hereafter the criterion for the existence of state enterprises would be the profits they make and the demand they would meet. Enterprises producing goods not demanded in the market and thus incurring losses will be curtailed. No state subsidies are going to be provided to the enterprises not running profitably. It is the responsibility of the enterprises to operate without losses. Logic behind such move is ; "You cannot be a master of your country if you are not a real master in your factory or collective farm, in your shop or your livestock farm. It is the duty of the work collectives to answer for everything, to multiply the social wealth."¹³

Related to these changes is the Soviet government's land-lease or contractual agreements in the agro-industrial complexes. Instead of collective farms the emphasis is now on small farms run by groups of people or individual farms on contract basis for a term extending from 25 to 50 years. The owners of small units can rent the machinery or other inputs from collective farms or from organisations outside. The government is now in favour of dissolving all inefficient farms and transferring of their land and assets not only to socialised farms and enterprises but also to collective individual tenants. In his 29th July, 1988 speech Gorbachev argued, "We should open widely the ways for autonomy and responsibility of the producers in every ways and extend an agricultural market. And let no one of us be confounded, if the usage of production means in the long term remains in the disposition of peasant on the basis of a contract with the farm enterprises. There is nothing unsocialist in this."¹⁴ It is necessary that podryard, and in particular the rent forms of farming, spread out widely in the country.

All these changes necessitate extension of commodity production and introduction of market mechanisms in the country, though such measures will have adverse impact on prices of the commodities. Gorbachev considers that there is nothing wrong in widening the scope of commodity production. He argues that it is "high time to overcome prejudices regarding commodity-money relations and underestimations of those relations in planned economic guidance. Refusal to recognise the importance of their active influence on people's interest in working better and on production efficiency leads to a weakening of the cost-accounting system and other undesirable consequences. Conversely, sound commodity-money relations on a socialist basis can create a situation under which the results depend entirely on the standards of the work done by the collectives and on the ability and initiative."¹⁵

Corollary of these changes is introduction of a new wage policy which claims to bring socialist society in conformity with Marx's principle of "from each according to his ability and each according to his work". It is claimed that wage levelling did undue harm to development of productive forces. The Soviet authorities claim that at times unnecessary bonuses were paid to inefficient and idle workers employed in one or the other jobs, in the name of sticking on to the ideal of full employment. The workers were paid wages though the industries incurred losses due to production of inefficient and useless goods. This kind of policy is said to have affected productive capacity of the socialist economy and discouraged the initiative among the efficient and active members of the working class. Hence 'perestroika' thinks of introducing a new wage policy which would "link wages and salaries more closely to the productivity of labour and labour's quality indicators." Wage levelling must be firmly eliminated and payment of unearned money and unmerited bonus must be stopped; it is essential to combat uncompromisingly unearned incomes and to root out other deviations from the basic principles of socialism.¹⁶ As such, from now on discrimination will be made between 'good and bad workers' and the managers will be given the right to "hire" and "fire" the workers. Workers will not be given salaries if their goods are not sold in the market. Wages will hereafter be decided according to the profits it secures. Monetary incentives will be given to the able and hard working labourers so as to encourage them to work harder to put national riches to the best possible use.

To sum up, the economic reforms initiated by the new regime, "provides for fundamental changes in every area, including the transfer of enterprises to complete cost accounting, a radical transformation of the centralised management of economy, fundamental changes in planning, a reform of the price formation system and of the financial crediting mechanism and the restructuring foreign economic ties. It also provides for the creation of the new organisational structures of management and for the all round development of the democratic foundations of managements, and for the broad introduction of self management principles".¹⁷

Gorbachev's perestroika does not merely stop at economic reforms. As a precondition for effective implementation of perestroika Gorbachev considers it necessary to bring about radical changes even in the political sphere. His political reforms aim at many modifications in

the structure and functions of the government, party, soviets, trade unions, Young Communist Leagues and local administrative bodies. The purpose of all these reforms is the development of the 'socialist democracy' or 'people's socialist government' where the people will have ultimate say in policy making and policy implementation. Of the many reforms, Gorbachev's appeal to end bureaucratisation, his appeal for decentralisation and assignment of new roles to the soviets and party bodies are important for understanding the dynamics of state in socialist society.

In all his books and speeches, Gorbachev makes explicit his contempt of the process of bureaucratisation in the USSR. Though he accepts that the bureaucracy has objective roots in the Russian society, Gorbachev indirectly argues that Stalin's role in the '30s and '40s was also an important factor in the development of command style method of administration. This bureaucratisation began to exert its influence on all political institutions viz., state, party, trade unions and administrative affairs and became a hindrance to economic progress. Managers virtually took all decisions from top to bottom, many a time ignoring the suggestions of the party and soviets. People's participation and their initiative were greatly hindered by this process.

The magnitude of the problem should naturally force the socialist regime to search for the methods to end bureaucratic centralism. To achieve this purpose Gorbachev proposes restructuring of managerial system, abolition of some of the redundant elements, reduction of the size of its apparatus, demarcation and delineation of the functions and responsibilities of each managerial unit. Accordingly 27th Congress demanded the simplification of administrative procedures and elimination of delays, formalistic attitudes, petty fogging and red tapism in the administration. It also laid stress on improving cultural standard and use of mass media and public platform to attack bureaucratic forms of working. The struggle "must be conducted through a tireless effort to promote democracy, extensively develop forms of socialist self-government, enhance and strengthen the powers of the soviets, ensure direct involvement of people in taking and implementing government decisions, make the public better informed about the state of affairs in various spheres of the country's life and enhance people's control over the activities of the government bodies."¹⁸ He claims that the "radical economic reforms, the reforms of the political system, democratisation of the party and of

society, glasnost, the promotion of criticism and self-criticism, and the genuine involvement of the people in running the country are seriously undermining the position of bureaucracy".¹⁹

Marxists may not have any serious objections to the above proposals to combat the evils of bureaucracy. However Gorbachev becomes controversial when he claims decentralisation in economic and political spheres as one of the effective methods of combating bureaucratisation. He firmly believes that the new law on state enterprises, widening of the scope of cooperative movement increasing the powers of work collective councils, promotion of khozraschot relations, autonomy and accountability and lease contract system would combat command style system prevailing in the economic field. To put in Gorbachev's words, "given the existing scale of our national economy and the diversity of our social problems, a single control authority cannot resolve all issues promptly and adequately. Hence the need to transfer many powers to the local level—to republics, territories, regionals, districts and work collectives."²⁰ Gorbachev is not ignorant of the dangers of decentralisation and significance of central authority in socialist state. So what he really wants appear to be decentralisation which does not contradict the legitimate power of the centre. That's why Gorbachev who at one level accepts the possibilities of decentralisation degenerating into self serving communalism, makes a contradictory statement at another place where he says that those who believe that the decentralisation which he proposes would lead to self serving communalism are making a grave mistake. To quote him, what is required now is "decentralisation that retains those functions of the central authorities without which one cannot assert the advantages of socialism or ensure the interests of the people—is the principal trend consonant with the demands of social development."²¹

The other aspect of Gorbachev's concern is the need to charge the existing relations between the party and the soviets. He is primarily interested in enhancing power and prestige of the soviets—the elected bodies. To Gorbachev, it is not merely the bureaucratic-managerial interference which is responsible for deprivation of the real powers of the present state of affairs. As such, the party General Secretary's favourite term 'command style administration' refers to both bureaucracy as well as the party. Gorbachev tries to justify this understanding by quoting Lenin. According to him, "Lenin repeatedly pointed to the harmful nature of the notions that a governing party must directly administer,

ignoring or replacing other organisations of working people. He insisted on the need to "delimit much more precisely the functions of the Party (and of its central committee) from those of Soviet government". Lenin strongly criticised attempts to saddle the party with the responsibility for solving every specific problem and censured the practice whereby "minor matters are dragged before the political bureau."²² Hence Gorbachev insists that "there must be a strict demarcation of the functions of the party and state bodies in conformity with Lenin's conception of party as a political vanguard of society and soviet state as an instrument of the government by the people".²³ Accordingly, the All Union Conference expressed its desire to enhance the executive, legislative, financial and supervisory powers of the soviets. New laws are enacted to entrust the soviets the necessary legal authority over legal enterprises, collective farms and the work collectives. Hereafter the party should not 'dictate' or 'command' the soviets to do this or that. Party should get its economic, social, ethnic policies implemented primarily via the bodies of people's representatives. In addition to all these changes, Gorbachev, keeping in view the necessity of implementing perestroika, suggested many modifications in the structure, functions and responsibilities of the party bodies at all levels.

Along with party reforms, perestroika's scope embraces even the higher governmental bodies like the Presidium and the Supreme Soviet. Recent conference advocates some kind of presidential form of government where the president would be charged with many responsibilities which are hitherto exercised by the Supreme Soviet. Such president, to quote Gorbachev, "should be granted sufficiently broad state authority powers. Specifically, its president could exercise overall guidance in the drafting of the legislation and of major socio-economic programmes, decides on the key issues of foreign policies, defence and national security, chair the defence council, submit proposals on nominating the chairman of the USSR's Council of Ministers, and discharge several other duties traditionally connected with presidency."²⁴

Is Gorbachev a Leninist ?

Once a brief summary of the official version of the various political and economic reforms introduced in the name of 'perestroika' is made,

it becomes essential to know whether the changes initiated by Gorbachev are consistent with the fundamentals of Marxism Leninism and whether the reforms will strengthen the possibilities of taking the advanced socialist states towards the classless and stateless communist society.

As far as Gorbachev is concerned, he always tries to project himself as a true Leninist. Not a single book or speech of Gorbachev is without references to Lenin. Whenever he talks of any reforms—either in cooperative farming or in the soviet and the party, he does not forget to quote from Lenin's works. What is more, he claims that his perestroika was inspired by Lenin's teachings. In his own words, "turning to Lenin has greatly stimulated the party and society in their search to find explanations and answers to the questions that have arisen". Gorbachev considers that all his predecessors deviated from Leninist understanding of socialist development. Hence Gorbachev takes upon himself the responsibility of restoring Lenin to his earlier glory, for, "today we have a better understanding of Lenin's last works which were in essence his political bequest and we more clearly understood why these works appeared".^{24a} However Gorbachev is very well aware of the criticism that many of his reforms do not have any sanction in classical Marxist writings. Hence he justifies perestroika as creative interpretation of Leninism to deal with the problems of advanced socialist society. To quote him, "the classics of Marxism Leninism left us with a definition of the essential characteristics of socialism. They did not give us a detailed picture of socialism. They spoke of its theoretically predictable stages. It is our job to show that what the present stage should be like... for, the classics teach us the approach, not the techniques".²⁵

To know how far Gorbachev's claims are true to the essence of Marxism, it is essential to study them by relating it to what Lenin and Stalin said at given historical junctures in Russian socialist development. Since the main purpose of the book is to comprehend the nature and dynamics of state, classes and economy under socialism, the chapter briefly touches various aspects of Soviet society to the extent they become necessary to theorise the nature of the socialist state in general.

New Economic Policy : Cooperatives as a form of state capitalism

Gorbachev's stress on promotion of cooperative movement to resolve many of the vital problems of socialist Russia is already high-

lighted: To him development of cooperatives is synonymous with the development of socialism. He argues that according to Lenin, "when state power is in the hands of the working people when the socialist state is the owner of the land and the basic means of production and when it directs the work of cooperatives, the growth of cooperatives in these conditions is identical with the growth of socialism".^{25a} In order to evaluate Gorbachev's claims, one may examine the circumstances which led Lenin to formulate cooperative policy and the status that Lenin assigned to cooperative movement in the building up of socialist setup in Russia.

Cooperative movement was initiated by Lenin as a part of the 'New Economic Policy'. Though the workers and peasants captured the state power in 1917 itself, for about three years after revolution, the Russia got entangled in civil war which was further complicated by the interference of the external forces. For that reason almost upto 1920 the Bolsheviks directed their whole attention in consolidating the revolution by diverting huge funds for strengthening the defence system. Strict controls were imposed on the economic activities and freedom for private trade was completely denied. Large amounts were extracted from agriculture to strengthen the power of the workers and soldier deputies. Some of the extremist elements in the Bolshevik party started attacking even the ordinary peasants. This situation caused extreme inconveniences to the peasantry and the much needed alliance between the workers and peasants was about to collapse. So, once the objective compulsions imposed by war-communism were overcome, it became the duty of the Bolshevik party to reestablish the relationship between the peasantry and the working class by taking appropriate steps.

In addition, the Soviet government had to make an objective assessment of the conditions in Russia in order to pave the way for socialist economy. It needs to be mentioned that at the time of revolution Russia was the most backward capitalist state in Europe. Though after February revolution, Lenin gave call for anti-capitalist socialist revolution on the basis of his analysis of the classes which attained power, he was fully aware of unaccomplished tasks of bourgeois democratic revolution, especially in social and economic spheres. Even though the dictatorship of the proletariat was established, Soviet Russia remained economically a backward capitalist society with remnants of many pre-capitalist structures. Building up socialist economy in such society requires accumulation of capital, development of productive forces, and

increase of production of all commodities. Since the socialist sector was not in a position to meet all the material requirements necessary for improving the conditions of the peasants and workers, as a necessary retreat, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy. Under the NEP the Soviet state permitted freedom of trade, capitalism and hired labour under overall guidance and supervision of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Stalin was right when he said that the "NEP is a policy of the proletarian state aimed at permitting capitalism while commanding positions are held by the proletariat state, aimed at increasing the role of socialist elements to the detriment of the capitalist elements, aimed at the victory of the socialist elements over the capitalist elements, *aimed at the abolition of classes and the building of the foundation of a socialist economy*".²⁶ (italics mine - author)

As such the NEP Russia is not capitalist Russia. Though the capitalist and the kulaks took advantage of the concessions given by the state, the main purpose of the NEP was to strengthen the bonds with the peasants by assuring them the right to trade. Because of the weakness of socialist sector trade became a condition indispensable then for the survival of peasant community.

While it is true that the NEP Russia was not capitalist Russia, it should also be mentioned that the NEP Russia was also not socialist Russia. Look at Lenin's words, "socialism is no longer a matter of distant future, or an abstract picture, or an icon. . . *NEP Russia will become socialist Russia*".²⁷ It can be understood from the quotation that the NEP Russia is not a socialist Russia but it was a precondition for the development of socialist Russia. As Stalin points out, Lenin never says that NEP would give us socialism ready made. There is great difference between the possibility of building socialism and the actual building of socialism. Correct understanding of this dual character of the NEP is essential for evaluating the status assigned to cooperatives.

Lenin pointed out that at the time of implementing the NEP Soviet Russia had multistructural economy with different modes of production viz. the patriarchal, small-commodity production, private capitalism, state capitalism and socialism all existing side by side. Among them, small-commodity production which included the majority of the peasants was a dominant mode of production. Lenin understood that one of the reasons for the backwardness of Russia lies in small production. Since

direct transition to the socialist form of agriculture was not possible, Lenin saw in the development of state capitalism, a possibility of transition to socialism. To quote him, "although it is not a socialist form, state capitalism, would be for us, and for Russia, more favourable form in a country whose economic system was and is to this day very backward."²⁸ At a time when there was no large scale industrial base and adequate trading and transport facilities state capitalism was seen as necessary conditions for linking peasant economy with industry; for amalgamating the small production and for augmenting capital accumulation. To achieve this end, many concessions were given to foreign firms, local industrialists and traders. But this state capitalism is to be differentiated from the state capitalism that exists in the advanced capitalist countries. By implanting state capitalism what the soviet government wanted was to "strengthen large scale production against petty production, advanced production against backward production and machine production against hand production. . . It also obtains a large quantity of products of large scale industry and strengthens state regulated economic relations as against the anarchy of petty bourgeois relations. The moderate and the cautious application of the concession policy will undoubtedly help us quickly to improve (to a modest extent) the state of industry and the conditions of the workers and peasants"²⁹ Such state capitalism obtained different forms in different fields. In agriculture it took the form of cooperatives.

Lenin was aware of the fact that transition to socialism is not possible by keeping the small farming intact. He firmly believed that "the small farming system under commodity production can not save the mankind from the poverty and oppression of the masses". In his opinion, "if we continue. . . on our small farms, even as free citizens on free land we shall be faced with inevitable ruin"³⁰ The only way out of poverty and backwardness was switching over to common cultivation in large model farms through application of modern techniques. As a step towards that Lenin appealed to the small peasants to organise the cooperative societies. The party and the government were advised to attract the peasants towards cooperative farming by patiently explaining to them of its practical advantages. Cooperatives are seen as practical solution to strengthening the bonds between the working class and the mass of peasantry. In addition to agricultural cooperatives the NEP encouraged promotion of cooperatives in trade and other services. Since the state cannot provide the peasants all necessary goods from the

socialised factories in exchange for his surplus, freedom to trade with surplus was legally guaranteed. Public initiative and competition were encouraged and different forms of exchange among the people and between agriculture and industry were developed.

Here one may attempt to know the status that Lenin assigned to the cooperatives. Does promotion of cooperatives synonymous with the growth of socialism as Gorbachev claims it? Lenin who argues that "exchange is freedom to trade; it is capitalism" contradicts Gorbachev when he clearly says "the cooperatives are also a form of state capitalism... The small commodity producers, cooperatives inevitably give rise to petty bourgeois, capitalist relations, facilitate their development, push the small capitalists into the foreground and benefit them most. . . In Russia's present conditions, freedom and right for the cooperative societies mean freedom and rights for capitalism. It would be stupid or criminal to close our eyes to this obvious truth".³¹ For Lenin cooperatives are necessary under the given conditions just as any other forms of state capitalism. They are considered as preconditions for large scale farming i.e., socialism. Gorbachev clearly misquoted Lenin when he wrote that, "*When the state power is in the hands of the working people*" growth of cooperatives is identical with the growth of socialism. For clarification let us look at Lenin's quotation, "Indeed the power of the state over all large scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry etc., — *is this not all that is necessary to bring complete socialist society out of cooperatives, out of cooperatives alone. . . It is not still the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it.*"³² [italics mine-author] In the same work, Lenin also says that under our present system cooperative enterprises "do not differ from socialist enterprises *if the land on which they are situated and the means of production belong to the state i.e. the working class.*" [italics mine-author] What do these passages imply? Lenin clearly says that cooperatives are only essential conditions for the development of socialism. It can be called socialism if only the land and the means of production belong to the working class. Gorbachev wrongly uses the term "working people" when he should have used the word, "working class". At the time of initiating the cooperative movement, every one knows that the land and means of production belonged to the peasants and not to the workers. Only when the cooperatives develop to the stage

of state farms where all would be workers, one can say that cooperatives are like state industrial enterprises.

From the above discussion it is clear that the cooperative movement was initiated as a part of the NEP at a time when there was the necessity of amalgamating small production into the larger ones. Cooperatives are not seen as socialist forms of production which are to be retained even after seven decades of socialist experiment. Cooperative movement is only a transition phase towards the development of large scale socialist production. With the development of strong socialist industrial base that could link the agriculture and industry the need for concessions to state capitalism disappeared. At this stage of Soviet economic development Gorbachev thinks of promoting or to put it more clearly, reverting back to cooperatives which are considered by Lenin as different forms of state capitalism. As such promotion of cooperative farming and widening exchange relations at this advanced stage of socialist development is against the spirit of Leninism.

Stalin and collective farm movement

Like Bukharin, Mikhael Gorbachev argues that Stalin's policy of collectivisation overlooked the significance that Lenin attributed to cooperative movement as "high road" to socialism. Gorbachev is critical of the collectivisation movement for introducing the command style method of administration; for ignoring the interests of the working peasantry and for making the middle peasants the target of collectivisation. Criticising the "excesses" committed during the period of collectivisation he asserts, "if there had been more considerations for the objective economic laws and if more attention had been given to the social processes taking place in the country-side, if in general the attitude to this vast mass of the working peasantry, most of whom have taken part in the revolution and had defended it from the white guards and the forces of intervention, had been politically more judicious, if there had been a consistent line to promote the alliance with the middle peasant against the kulak, then there would not have been all those excesses that occurred in carrying out collectivisation".³³ Though in his book, *Perestroika*, he was full of appreciation for the success story of collectivisation movement, in his speech at the 4th All Union Congress of Collective Farmers Gorbachev argued that collective farm movement did more harm to the

agricultural sector. Examples he cites are "repeated amalgamations and the appointment of poorly trained personnel, at times, as executives....The consequences of this kind of attitude are the slow progress in the solution of the food problem, the shortages in and narrow choice of many consumer goods and the limited range of daily services. . . . As a result of departing from the Leninist principle of the cooperative movement the country and its economy have suffered substantial setbacks in political, moral and social terms".³⁴

To know how far such criticism is valid and is consistent with the real facts, one should look at the history of collectivisation in the USSR. At the outset, it may be made clear that the idea of collectivisation was not the brain child of Stalin. It had its basis in teachings of Lenin who insisted that, "We must pass to common cultivation in large model farms; otherwise there will be no escape from the truly desperate situation in which Russia finds itself".³⁵ As such, Lenin did not consider cooperatives of small peasants as an end in itself; they are only means to be utilised, only to transform them to large scale production at appropriate time.

It is seen that Gorbachev accuses Stalin of ignoring the basic knowledge of the laws governing economic development and that he hastily implemented the policy of collectivisation when the cooperatives did not completely exhaust their capabilities. Before examining these assertions, it needs to be made clear that the criterion for switching over to large collective farms was not whether the cooperatives exhausted their capabilities or not. The question under consideration is whether the cooperatives created the necessary conditions where collectivisation becomes possible and desirable. A keen study of Stalin's literature shows that almost upto the end of 1930 Stalin did not speak of collectivisation. Even in 1927 also he opposes fomenting any class struggle in the country-side.³⁶ But what forced Stalin initiate collective farm movement at the time when the first Five Year Plan was implemented? Stalin answers the question on the basis of development of the productive forces and relative strengths of the collective farm and of the kulak class. During the period of the NEP, the kulaks took advantage of the state concessions and amassed considerable wealth. Their share in total agricultural production and exchange was still significant. So long the productivity of collective and state farms did not out weigh that of the kulaks, it is not possible to eliminate the kulaks. It is this understanding which made Stalin wait upto 1929, when the total production and marketable surplus

of the collective and state farms increased substantially.³⁷ The moment this position is achieved the process of collectivisation was initiated.

What was the substance of collectivisation movement? In essence collectivisation means passing over to large scale mechanised production by eliminating the class of kulaks from the agrarian sector. It presupposes fulfilment of a few conditions. At first, it needs liberation of the small peasants from the slavish attachment to his little plot of land and combining small peasant plots into large scale collective farms. Secondly, it requires attracting the middle peasants towards collective farms by demonstrating to them of the gains of introducing highly mechanised methods of farming. Finally the collectivisation should initiate class struggle to deprive the kulaks of their products, instruments and means of production.

The Soviet state under Stalin's leadership formulated a new agrarian policy aiming at achievement of these conditions. Soviet agrarian laws accordingly demanded nationalisation of land and abolition of the absolute rent and private ownership of land. They attacked property of the kulaks and took possession of grain reserves totalling tens of millions of poods. Attempts were made to supply adequate tractors and other material support of the farmers who joined the collective farms in large numbers. In the main, contrary to the expectations of Bukharinites there was good response from the peasants to the collective farm movement. Between 1929 and 1933, number of collective farms increased from 57 thousands to 224.5 thousands and the number of households in collective farms raised from 1 million to 15.2 millions. By 1933, 65% of the peasant farms were collectivised.^{37a} Despite opposition from the kulaks and the initial technical difficulties of reorganisation the production of agricultural products showed a moderate increase. Before Stalin's death, Russia could increase the production of consumer and other productive goods to a considerable extent. Though Soviet economy was almost shattered during the second World War, within a decade Russia could reconstruct its economy. Industrial output in 1950 stood at 73% above 1940. Production of capital goods doubled and the consumer goods increased by 23% per cent. Labour productivity in industry increased by 50% between 1940 and 1951.³⁸ Concentrating on production of capital goods was then a historic necessity. However during this period production of consumer goods also increased considerably. Between 1930 and 1953 production of fabrics increased from 1,947 millions

square metres to 4,582 million square metres; paper from 495 thousands tonnes to 1,611 thousand tonnes; that of leather shoes from 75 to 331 million pairs and clocks and watches from 0.23 million units to 12.8 million units. Production of refrigerators increased from 3,500 in 1940 to 49,200 in 1953 and that of TVs from 300 to 34,000 during the same period. Supply of radios and radiogrammes increased from 29,300 in 1932 to 1.64 million units in 1953.^{38a} Fifth Plan gave considerable importance to increase the consumer goods. Now one may have a look at agriculture. In spite of the crop failures that followed the war, grain output increased to 100 million tonnes in 1955. Between 1940 and 1950 the total heads of productive livestock, sharply reduced during the war, restored and in 1950 increased by 4 per cent. It was true that production in agriculture did not increase considerably. But attributing this slow growth only to collectivisation and ignoring the factors such as the opposition of the kulaks, second World War and the periodic famines that hit Russia during this period, is not a dialectical way of evaluating the given phenomenon. If the objective limitations imposed by the national and international conditions are taken into consideration, one has to agree that the economic progress achieved during Stalin's period was indeed remarkable. It is not difficult to understand that such spectacular achievements could not be achieved with command style method of administration. No amount of bureaucratic oppression could succeed without the absence of active participation of the masses.

The achievements however need not make one ignore the mistakes or the so-called 'excesses' committed during the period of collectivisation. Gorbachev accuses the party of its ignorance of the necessity to maintain alliance with the middle peasants. But reading of Stalin's works shows that the truth was contrary to what Gorbachev asserts. One can find number of references in Stalin's writings³⁹ where he stressed the necessity of aligning with the middle peasants against the kulaks. The official policy was to attract the peasants towards collective farms by convincing them of the practical advantages of the mechanised production. During the initial years of collectivisation the principle was strictly followed. As a result, lakhs of middle peasants voluntarily joined the collective farms.

However, in their over enthusiasm to meet the plan targets certain local party men and government officials began to attack the property of the middle peasants also. It created illfeeling among the affected middle peasants. Moreover, it was found out that Lenin's principle of taking into

consideration the diversity of conditions in various regions of the USSR was violated in building collective farms. The moment such incidents were brought to the notice of Stalin, he reviewed the situation and directed the party and government to put an end to such "excesses". He was highly critical of the bureaucratic attitude of those conceited representatives of the party whose belief in the omnipotence of the decrees, resolutions and orders diluted the party's revolutionary measures.⁴⁰

It is known that once the causes of "excesses" are detected the state took appropriate measures to rebuild the confidence among the middle peasants. An unbiased analysis shows that the "excesses" are not the result of party's official policy. Accepting that there are some excesses, one should question oneself whether the historic necessity of collectivisation be overlooked just because certain excesses were committed in implementation of a correct policy. That was precisely the question Stalin poses to Bukharin and his friends who were magnifying the mistakes committed during that period. Stalin, then rightly observed, "the conclusion to be drawn from this is that we must combat the excesses. But can one on those grounds decry the line itself, which is the only correct line".⁴¹

Centralisation vs Decentralised Economic Planning

In decentralisation Gorbachev finds solutions to problems of bureaucratisation, inadequacy of consumer goods, poor quality of industrial products and lack of initiative among the workers. His ideas on 'co-operative', 'lease contract agreements', 'khozaschots', 'cost accounting system' and stoppage of state subsidies are all different aspects of his policy of economic decentralisation. Since he justifies all these things by referring to Lenin it becomes essential to examine Lenin's view on centralisation and decentralisation.

Lenin was always in favour of large scale industry. He considers heavy industries as foundations for future communist society. Hence in spite of all difficulties he stood for the development of socialist sector at any cost. In his report to the 4th Congress of Communist International he clearly stated: "The salvation of Russia lies not only in good harvest on the peasant farms — that is not enough; we also need heavy industry. And to put it in good condition we will require several years of work... Heavy industry needs state subsidies. If we are not able to provide them, we shall

be doomed as a civilised state, let alone as a socialist state".⁴² Lenin was not unaware of the fact that there may be losses in certain heavy industries, yet he never thought of abandoning them merely for the losses they incurred. Further one may see that in contrast to Gorbachev's argument, Lenin demanded greatest possible centralisation of large scale production throughout the country. "The All Russia centre therefore should definitely be given the right of direct control over all the enterprises of the given branch of industry. The regional centres define their functions depending on local conditions of life etc., in accordance with the general production directions and decisions of the centres. To deprive the All Russia centre of the right of direct control over all the enterprises of the given industry throughout the industry would be a regional anarcho-syndicalism and not communism"⁴³.

Centralism which Lenin speaks of is centralism created on the foundations of proletarian democracy. Gorbachev does not understand that it is not the existence of democratic centralism but its degeneration into mechanical centralism, which was the basis of so many problems affecting the Russian society. It is this ignorance which makes Gorbachev talk of autonomy to the production units and self-management. But Lenin was clear in his ideas when he says "any direct or indirect legalisations of the rights of any given factory or any given trade on their particular production, or of their right to weaken or impede orders of the state authority, is a flagrant distortion of the basic principles of Soviet power and a complete rejection of socialism".⁴⁴ He clearly says at another instance that, "we suggest nothing like ridiculous transfer of the railways to railway men or tanneries for the tanners."⁴⁵ When Kautsky alleged that Lenin gave such anarcho-syndicalist slogans at the time of revolutions, Lenin retorted, "Just think: on August 5, when numerous decrees on the nationalisation of factories in Russia had been issued. . . not a single factory had been "appropriated" by the workers, but had all been converted into the property of the republic. . . Kautsky on the strength of obviously crooked interpretation of one sentence in my speech, tries to make the German readers believe that in Russia the factories are turned over to the individual groups of workers!"⁴⁶

Now let us examine Gorbachev's idea of making farmers the sovereigns of their lands. It is already observed in our discussion on cooperatives and collective farms that Lenin's preference was in favour of converting small units into large agricultural farms based on advanced

technology. In pleading for large scale production in agriculture, Lenin was not concentrating merely on the problems of increasing the volume of production. In reality Lenin was more particular about overcoming the roots of capitalism which lie hidden in the small commodity production. Though commodity production in itself is not capitalism, its very presence presupposes existence of private property and exchange. And there lies the possibility of engendering capitalism and there exists the danger of restoration of bourgeois system. As Lenin clearly points out in his work, *Left Wing Communism and an Infantile Disorder*, the bourgeois elements arising on the basis of small production, "surround the proletariat on every side with a petty bourgeois atmosphere which permeates and corrupts the proletariat, and constantly causes among the proletariat relapses into petty bourgeois spinelessness, disunity, individualism and altering moods of exaltation and dejection".⁴⁷ It injects vacillation and wavering mentality among the ranks of the proletariat and its party. Hence Lenin stressed the need for overcoming the small production.

Considering the specificity of Russia, Lenin clearly understood that it is not possible to do away with commodity production at once. Commodity production exists so long the socialist sector is not developed to a stage where it can satisfy all the national needs of the society. This is a process which can only be overcome gradually. During the period of NEP, it is true that, Lenin stressed the necessity of proletarian state utilising the commodity relations to increase the productive forces and to combat bureaucratic evils. Considering the then objective situation, what Lenin did at that time was indeed a correct step. But to argue that the scope of commodity relations should never be restricted amounts to negation of Leninism. In course of the development of higher and higher forms of social production, the operation of law of value should be restricted gradually by curtailing the scope of small commodity production. This was what Stalin did while initiating the process of collectivisation. However Stalin was not unaware of the fact that the commodity production would continue to exist for a long time to come. So long collective farms and socialist industry exist side by side, exchange between town and country becomes inevitable. Only when the collective farms are elevated to the status of state farms and one single integrated economic relations comes to stay in the economy, then the necessity of commodity relations disappears. Until this stage is reached, commodity relations are to be regulated by the proletariat with the ultimate aim of establishing the communist society.⁴⁸ But what Gor-

bachev's government is doing is the reversal of this trend. In the name of increasing production somehow, the present regime created conditions for widening the scope of small commodity production. Though it may solve temporarily the problem of scarcity in production this negative process creates many hurdles by engendering the seeds of capitalism in social, economic and political spheres. All these will further complicate the things as in East European countries.

Monetary incentives and the law of socialist production

Gorbachev thinks it necessary to reform the wage system. This reform is a part of his overall policy to increase the production in the U.S.S.R. He demands that the perestroika should strictly implement the Marx's principle of "from each according to his work and each according to his abilities". Through such reforms Gorbachev wants to "fire" the incompetent and idle workers and "reward" the hard working people with monetary incentives. He believes that the incentives would encourage them to produce more and more. Hence he extends this scope of incentives even to the farmers in collective farms. It is also seen that Gorbachev's idea of making farmers the real sovereigns is primarily based on his belief that sense of possessiveness and the possibility of earning more would encourage the peasants to work hard. All his ideas on 'cooperatives', 'agrarian market' and 'socialist competition' are precisely directed towards that end.

To be frank, Gorbachev's plan of increasing the production is not his original contribution.. It is merely a continuation of the same process which Khrushchev initiated in the early sixties. To Khrushchev, socialism was synonymous with abundance in production. On the plea that the production in the socialist Russia was lower when compared to that of the U.S.A. Khrushchev took upon himself the responsibility of drawing the programme for creating abundance in production. It was then that monetary incentives were introduced in the name of encouraging the workers to produce more. Here, Khrushchev failed to understand how Russia, a backward capitalist country before the revolution was transformed within 35 years into a powerful socialist society that could compete with the U.S.A. and other capitalist countries both in the economic and military fields. No material incentives were given to the Russian masses for making great sacrifices to build up the socialist system. Without understanding how this could happen, Khrushchev and his disciple Gor-

bachev think of giving monetary incentives as in the capitalist countries to make the people produce more.

Another mistake that Gorbachev does is to see monetary incentives in contrast to wage equalisation. Gorbachev criticises that the wage policies that his predecessors adopted were based on the idea of wage equalisation. But Stalin's literature shows that he was very much opposed to the practice of wage equalisation. He understood that since the society did not reach the second stage of communism, the principle of "from each according to his work and each according to his ability" should be continued. In such society where the difference between the skilled and unskilled labour continues to exist, wage differences are bound to be there. Those differences in wages are necessary to encourage the unskilled workers to become skilled so that the differences between the mental labour and the manual labour can gradually be eliminated from the society. This understanding is opposed to that of Gorbachev who considers that the wage differences are necessary to reward the talented and punish the idle and insincere workers and also those workers whose products are not sold in the markets. Undue stress Gorbachev gives to monetary incentives will have adverse impact on the minds of the workers. As a result hereafter the workers would start working if only they get personal benefits for the work they do. Consequently the workers would become individualistic and forget their social responsibilities. All this would only amount to negating the socialist consciousness which is very essential for building up of a communist society.

In the capitalist society, where due to exploitation of surplus value the real incomes of the workers continue to fall, the capitalists use the tactics of incentives only to exploit the workers more and more. Such a necessity does not exist in socialism. Here the basic aim of production is not extraction of surplus value but maximum satisfaction of the material and cultural needs of the people. In socialism where there is no exploitation, the real incomes of the people continue to increase. As a consequence of the rise in purchasing power the demand for the goods always exceed the actual production capacities. It is in contrast to capitalism where the demand always falls short of the actual production capacities. That production falls short of the demand, is not the defect of socialist society, as Gorbachev seems to consider; in fact that is an asset. It is this feature which gives impetus to the continuous development of the productive forces in socialist society. What is actually needed in such

system is the organisation of production relations in conformity with the growing productive forces. It necessitates opting for higher forms of social production keeping in pace with the process of economic development.

Ignoring the basic principles of Marxism, Deng Xiao Peng and Gorbachev opted two diverse interpretations of socialist law of production. The present leadership in China argues that the relations of production in their country are ahead of the productive forces to bring them in conformity with the relations of production. On the contrary, Gorbachev started arguing that in Russia the previous regimes hastily ran after higher forms of production relations when the lower forms had not yet exhausted their capabilities. The result in both the cases is the same. Both China and Russia started stressing the application of modern technology and ignored the necessity of upgrading the relations of production. In the case of the USSR, encouraging the cooperatives and individual farming at this advanced stage of socialism amounts to reversing back the course of socialist production.

The criterion for socialist production is not how much one produces but how one produces. Socialist production is to be organised by elevating continuously the cultural standard of the people. Higher forms of socialist production require that individualism among the workers, slavish attachment of the peasants to their lands and "it is not my business" psychology of the petty bourgeois elements should be attacked from all sides. They cannot be overcome by mere technological advancement. What is needed is a proletarian cultural revolution that eliminates all anti-working class ideas that obstruct the socialist path of development. In spite of the stress that Lenin gave to improve the educational and the cultural standard of the people,⁴⁹ from the beginning the Bolsheviks failed to initiate ideological and cultural struggle. What is now initiated in Russia in the name of 'glasnost' is not a proletarian cultural revolution, but a counter-revolution which started injecting bourgeois ideas, values and habits—all in the name of socialist consciousness. If these trends in the mass thinking remain unchecked, the chances of restoration of the capitalist mode of production becomes all the more strong.

Transition from Dictatorship of the Proletariat to Communism :

In the light of far reaching economic changes taking place in the USSR, can the political system remain true to what the classical Marxists

thought of? How does the present leadership characterise the nature of the state and society in the Soviet Union? To know answers to these questions let us turn to Gorbachev once again. According to him, "established as a result of the socialist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat played a decisive role in creating the new society and in the process it too underwent changes. With the abolition of the exploiter classes the function of the suppressing the resistance of the overthrown exploiters gradually faded away and full scope was given to accomplishing its foremost constructive tasks. *Having fulfilled its historic mission the dictatorship of the proletariat has evolved into a political power of all working people, while the proletarian state has become the state of the whole people*".⁵⁰ The statement implies that the present state should no longer be considered as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Historic mission of the dictatorship was to eliminate the exploiting classes was accomplished successfully and with that Russian society entered the new stage of socialist development i.e. the state of all people. All the prevailing classes namely, the workers, peasants and the intelligentsia are non-antagonistic in nature and they are the allies in favour of building up of communist society. Hence present Russian state is the state of all people and the Communist Party of Russia is the party of all people.

Here it may be mentioned that this interpretation is not Gorbachev's innovation. It has its roots in Khrushchev who for the first time introduced such ideas in the 21st and 22nd Congress of the CPSU. With little modifications Brezhnev introduced the concepts of "developed socialism" and "state and party of all people" in the Russian constitution of 1977. The Russian intellectuals like Antoly Yegerov and E. Chekharin tried to project his ideas as a further creative innovation in the theory of Marxism and Leninism and a mile stone on the road to communist self-government and the withering away of the state. To justify this E. Chekharin quotes from Mikhail Kalinin who in 1926 said, "as the building of socialism goes ahead, capitalist relations are uprooted and the capitalists disappear, the proletarian state gradually turn into a state of the whole people, full of new significance and substance."⁵¹ Thus starting from Khrushchev to Gorbachev all of them made attempts to justify the idea of "state of all people" by citing quotations from different classical sources. Hence critical evaluation of their interpretation of the present Russian state presupposes a comprehensive understanding of the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Marx considers that between capitalism and communism there is a transitory phase where revolutionary transformation of one to another takes place. During this period, Marx insists that the state cannot be anything but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Unlike the anarchists who plead for abolition of all forms of state, the Marxists argue that after overthrowing the political rule of the exploiters, the victorious proletariat should establish its own state after destroying the old bourgeois state machinery. Establishment of the state of the proletariat is considered essential to eliminate the exploiting classes completely from the political and economic spheres. Applying this theme to the concrete conditions of Russia, Lenin called the Russian state after November Revolution as the state of workers and peasants. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat under the concrete conditions of a backward include within its system the semi-proletarian strata and the poor peasants as its supporting base and the middle peasants as its allies. But this ruling coalition is to be led by the revolutionary proletariat whose ultimate aim is to establish classless and stateless communist society.⁵²

Such a system of the dictatorship of the proletariat is essential to overcome the challenges of the capitalists and the Kulaks who remain powerful for many more years after revolution owing to their material possessions, organisational abilities, professional skills, administrative and military contacts and their links with the international bourgeoisie. The overthrown bourgeoisie use all its energies to restore the rule of capital. Hence Lenin said that the strength of the bourgeoisie would grow ten fold after the revolution.⁵³ To overcome and eliminate the resistance of such enemy a protracted struggle against the kulaks and the capitalists become essential. In Russia the task was fulfilled in the 1930s with the successful implementation of the policies of industrialisation and collectivisation. Recognising this change, in his speech delivered at the time of introducing the constitution of the USSR in 1936, Stalin claimed that the exploiting classes were completely eliminated from the Russian society.⁵⁴

If the aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat is only to eliminate exploiting classes from political and economic spheres, the task was accomplished in Russia in mid-1930s itself. Hence one tempts to argue—like Gorbachev—that the dictatorship is now no more essential in the USSR where the existing classes are only allies of the proletariat. How-

ever, reading of the Marxist classics would show that the dictatorship of proletariat is necessary not only to eliminate the exploiting classes but also to put an end to the existence of all classes. The dictatorship of the proletariat should exist as long as the classes exist; no matter whether they are antagonistic or non-antagonistic. One may find numerous references about this aspect in Marx's and Lenin's writings. As early as 1852, Marx wrote to J. Weydemeyer that what he actually found out was "that the existence of classes is merely linked to particular historical phases in the development of production, that class struggles necessarily lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat, that this dictatorship only constitutes the transition to abolition of all classes and to a classless society."⁵⁵ Lenin developed this idea of Marx into a systematic theory. In the Third Congress of the Communist International he said, "The dictatorship of the proletariat does not signify a cessation of class struggle, but its continuation in new forms, and with new weapons. This dictatorship of the proletariat is *essential as long as classes exist*, as long as the bourgeoisie overthrown in one country intensifies ten fold its attack on socialism on an international scale".⁵⁶ In his *Greetings to the Hungarian workers* he further clarifies, "the abolition of classes requires a long, difficult and stubborn struggle which after the overthrow of the capitalist rule, after the destruction of the bourgeoisie, after the establishment of the proletariat does not disappear but merely changes its forms and in many respects becomes fiercer". In the same article Lenin writes "in order to abolish classes a period of the dictatorship of one class is needed, the class, precisely that oppressed class which is capable of not only overthrowing the exploiters, not only ruthlessly crushing their resistance, but also breaking ideologically with the entire bourgeois democratic outlook, with all the philistine mongering about the liberty and equality in general".⁵⁷ When can one expect to abolish the classes completely? Lenin answers, "... in order to abolish the classes completely, it is not enough to overthrow the exploiters, the landowners and the capitalists, not only to abolish their rights of ownership, it is necessary also to *abolish all private ownership of the means of production, it is necessary to abolish the distinction between the manual workers and brain workers. This requires a long period of time. In order to achieve this an enormous step forward must be taken in developing the productive forces; it is necessary to overcome the resistance of the numerous survivals of the small scale production, it is necessary to overcome the enormous force of habit and conservatism which are connected with the survivals.*"⁵⁸

The essence of all these passages may be summarised as follows:-

1. The dictatorship of the proletariat does not merely mean the use of force. It does not exist only to eliminate the exploiting classes.
2. Proletariat dictatorship exists as long as classes exist. It is the job of the proletariat to create conditions for elimination of classes.
3. The historic mission of such dictatorship is not fulfilled merely by eliminating exploiters from the economic scene. It has to fight out bourgeois thinking which continues to persist even after the elimination of classes as economic categories.
4. The dictatorship of the proletariat continues so long as small commodity production and petty bourgeoisie thrive in the towns and countryside.
5. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the state should organise the labour and production with ultimate aim of elevating the economy to a stage where the principle "from each according to his work and each according to his needs" can be implemented.
6. The state of the working class has the responsibility of organising the workers on higher moral and ethical grounds. Unless the workers get out of bourgeois and petty bourgeois cultures, they will not be able to administer themselves. Thus the dictatorship is seen as a stage where the proletariat state becomes a teacher, guide and mentor of the working class.

In view of such complex role that the proletariat state plays, Lenin defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as "a stubborn struggle—bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative—against forces of tradition of the old society".⁵⁹

Now one may look at the present state of affairs in Russia to judge whether all the historic tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat are accomplished or not. Gorbachev himself accepts that in Russian society along with workers there exists peasant community which is to speak in Lenin's language nothing but a petty-bourgeois class. In addition, Gorbachev himself talks of moral degradation in Russia, of "penetration

of stereotypes of mass culture alien to us” and of young generation who are “after profit at all costs”⁶⁰ Here one may also take note of the rebirth of nationalist feelings within the Soviet Republics, in spite of the fact that economic exploitation of one national by another disappeared long ago. In ‘class terms’ none of them exhibits revolutionary proletarian culture and ethics. The so-called ‘radical’ demands for freedom and multi-party system gaining momentum in the name of ‘glasnost’ is nothing but infiltration of bourgeois democratic thinking. Again it needs to be remembered that the USSR is now only in the first stage of communism where the possibility of infiltration of powerful international bourgeoisie still remains. In such conditions it is wrong to claim that the historic mission of the dictatorship of the proletariat is already accomplished. The proletarian dictatorship continues to have relevance so long the unaccomplished tasks in political, economic and cultural spheres remain unfulfilled.

To speak of a different stage in the development of socialist state, when its old stage is still relevant, is a negation of Marxism Leninism. At no place Marx and Lenin spoke of another stage called ‘state of all people’ in between the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. When Lenin stated that in socialism “state” is no longer a state in the proper sense, he said that to make it explicit that the proletarian state is the state of majority of the people against the exploiters which is an insignificant minority. Hence it is not necessary to shed so much blood as in the cases of all other regimes led by the exploiting minorities.⁶¹ Lenin long back made it clear: “The class which took power into its hands, did so knowing that it took power alone. That is a part of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The concept has meaning only when one class knows that it alone is taking political power in its hands and does not deceive itself or others with the talk about ‘popular’ government elected by all, sanctified by the whole people”.⁶² Even if the existing peasant community in Russia is not exploitative in nature, on its own, it will not choose communism unless it is led by the revolutionary proletariat. If the leading role of the proletariat is accepted, it only means that even if there is absence of violence or external threat, there still exists the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Question of Bureaucracy In Socialist Society

Marx, Engels and Lenin thought that after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat would break the bureaucratic machinery of the state and replace it by a new proletariat state devoid of all bureaucratic distortions. But it should be admitted that in the case of Russia, notwithstanding its socialist development under the dictatorship of the proletariat, bureaucratic institutions could not be eliminated. On the contrary, as Gorbachev would point out, bureaucracy became a powerful institution that could affect the working of all administrative and economic bodies. Since such command-management system is responsible for the weakening of the role of peoples' bodies like the soviets and trade unions, Gorbachev's perestroika expresses its desire to fight out bureaucratisation.

What is the root cause of such bureaucratic distortions in the socialist set ups? At least in his book, *Perestroika*, Gorbachev accepts that the problems related to bureaucracy have objective base. However, Gorbachev indirectly argues that some subjective factors are also responsible for command management system.⁶³ He becomes more explicit in his speech at the 19th All Union Congress where he blames Stalin and his associates for initiating the process of bureaucratisation. According to Gorbachev, "at a certain stage the political system established as a result of the October Revolution underwent serious deformations. This made possible the omnipotence of Stalin and his entourage, and the wave of repressive measures and lawlessness. The command methods of administration that arose in those years had a direct effect on various aspects of development of our society. Rooted in that system are many of the difficulties that we experience to this day".⁶⁴ Realisation of this 'new truth' forces Gorbachev to take up necessary measures to put an end to command management system.

Before evaluating Gorbachev's position on bureaucracy, one should first seek answers for certain fundamental issues related to the socialist society in the USSR. The questions include : (1) What is the socio-economic basis of bureaucracy in Soviet Russia ? (2) How far was Stalin responsible for its growth? (3) What is the class character of the bureaucrats and professionals ? (4) What are the conditions necessary for total elimination of bureaucratic institutions? Let us examine these issues on

the basis of Lenin's works.

Bureaucracy is not a phenomenon associated exclusively with Stalin and post-Stalin periods in the Russian history. It existed even at the time of Lenin. Though Lenin insisted that the old state machinery of the landlords and capitalists should be destroyed, because of the peculiar conditions that prevailed in Russia at the time of revolution, Lenin considered it impossible to throw out all the bureaucrats at one stroke. As Lenin himself put it, "In our country bureaucratic practices have different economic roots, namely, atomised and scattered state of small producers, with his poverty, literacy, lack of culture, the absence of roads and exchange between agriculture and industry, the absence of connection and interaction between them".⁶⁵ Hence it requires many more years of consistent fight to overthrow the bureaucracy completely. To quote Lenin again, "When you are called upon to 'put a stop to bureaucratic practices' it is demagoguery. It is nonsense, we shall be fighting the evils of bureaucracy for many more years to come and whoever thinks otherwise is playing demagogue and clearly cheating, because overthrowing the evils of bureaucracy requires hundreds of measures, wholesale literacy, culture and participation in the workers and peasant inspection".⁶⁶

Though workers and peasants took over political power from the Czar and the Russian bourgeoisie, they did not have the experience and capability to run the administrative and economic bodies. Hence there was a necessity to retain many bureaucrats and professionals who were till then working under the Czarist and Kerensky's governments. Lenin was not unaware of the bourgeois attitude of such workers. He also knew that many Czarist and bourgeois elements which had lost their economic and political power, gradually entered the bureaucratic apparatus as managers and technicians. It was considered premature to give call for total elimination of such elements until and unless the working people gave birth to its own intelligentsia capable of handling all the administrative, economic and technical problems involved in socialist development. Association with bourgeois experts is seen as a condition essential for the proletariat to develop its own skills. The concessions that the bourgeois experts used to get in the initial years of development were viewed as the "price" that the working class pay for learning from them.⁶⁷ Though the bourgeoisie played significant role as experts for quite

sometime, they could not consolidate their position forever. With the complete elimination of the kulaks and the capitalists and with the gradual inflow of the educated people from the working class and peasantry, the strength of the bourgeoisie began to fall down. Charles Bettelheim's argument that the bourgeoisie consolidated its position as 'state bourgeoisie'⁶⁸ is against the historic reality. Mere existence of bourgeoisie in the state machinery or the predominance of bourgeois practices in administration cannot automatically turn the proletariat state into the state of the bourgeoisie, just as the presence of representatives of the proletariat cannot make the capitalist state into a proletariat state. Yet, owing to ideological backwardness and absence of cultural revolution, the representatives of the workers and peasants who entered into bureaucracy could not completely overcome the bourgeois practices of their predecessors. Hence in spite of the disappearance of the bourgeois class as economic category, bureaucracy as an ideology and as a method of working continued to affect the administrative process in the socialist Russia.

Stalin was first to detect this new development. He noticed that the bureaucratic method of functioning entered even within the party, komsomols, trade unions and economic bodies. It is incorrect to say that Stalin had no intention to fight out the bureaucratisation. In the case of bourgeois experts, he correctly handled their dual character before and after the civil war in the early 30s. However, he understood that it is not so easy to handle the communist bureaucrats. As he himself puts it, "If it were only a question of the old bureaucrats, the fight against bureaucratism would be very easy. The trouble is that it is not a matter of the old bureaucrats. It is a matter of the new bureaucrats, bureaucrats who sympathise with the Soviet government and finally communist bureaucracy with the title of party member. And unfortunately, we have quite a number of such communist bureaucrats".⁷⁰ Stalin had contempt for bureaucracy and he never wanted to rest the fortunes of socialism on the shoulders of socialist bureaucrats. However, his dependence on those elements became inevitable during the second World War where the prompt action was necessary to deal with the Fascist menace. The necessity of dealing with internal and external enemies was so much that Stalin could not but depend on bureaucracy which he himself desisted. It was true that some of the bureaucrats took advantage of the freedom they got and committed many mistakes in handling the extraordinary situat-

tion. These stray incidents should not lead one to conclude that all the excesses committed by them had the sanction of Stalin. Stalin had no intention to cover the mistakes committed during the period, as Gorbachev or his predecessor, Khrushchev alleged. In the 18th Congress of the CPSU, Stalin himself admitted that "grave mistakes" took place during the purges. So while evaluating these exceptional situations in the Russian history, peculiar national and international conditions of that period should be taken into consideration. Stalin never argued that the state should continue to depend on the bureaucracy even in ordinary conditions. If the evils of bureaucracy continue to dominate the Russian society even 35 years after Stalin's death, it is the post-Stalin leadership—not Stalin who had to be blamed. Nothing would have stopped the post-Stalin leadership bent upon de-Stalinisation to wage a struggle against the bureaucracy. An impartial study shows that the so-called command-management method of working, which Gorbachev criticised, further spread its tentacles after Stalin's death. It is ridiculous to blame Stalin for the problems that the present society faces.

If Gorbachev truly desires to fight out bureaucracy, it is indeed a welcome step. If the new leadership attempts to increase the cultural and ideological consciousness of the people, encourage mass criticism of bureaucratic practices and initiate mass participation in public affairs, then definitely one can overcome the evils of bureaucracy. But if Gorbachev mistakes bureaucracy with central planning and locates the solution for the problems arising out of bureaucratisation in 'decentralisation', then he only demeans the socialist status of the central authority and help in decentralising the bureaucracy up to the local levels.

Party and Soviets in the System of The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Mikhail Gorbachev who characterises the Communist Party as the party of the whole people expects the party to become a vehicle for implementing perestroika. Accordingly he proposes many reforms affecting the structure and functions of the party and party's relationship with the Soviets. It is already mentioned that Gorbachev is against excessive interference of the party in the affairs of the soviets and brands such intervention as bureaucratic. Hence he argues for separation of powers between the soviets and the party. To justify his statement Gorbachev says, 'Lenin repeatedly pointed to the harmful nature of the

notion that a governing party must directly administer, ignoring or replacing other organisations of working people. He insisted on the need to delimit much more precisely the functions of the party (and of its Central committee) from those of Soviet Government".⁷¹ In addition to demarcating the restrictive roles of the soviets and the party, Gorbachev talks of cleansing the whole party of all its internal defects. He bitterly criticises command style method that developed within the party, especially during Stalin's regime. According to him "Our party was built by Lenin as an organisation of like minded members and free discussion of all problems and joint actions once a decision has been made was a law in it. But when command style method of administration got established, the atmosphere of party comradeship was gradually giving way to relations based on orders and their execution, on the division of Party members into chiefs and subordinates, relations in which equality among the communists was flouted."⁷² As a result, the principle of democratic centralism degenerated into bureaucratic centralism and many of the leaders began to consider that they are infallible and above criticism. This led to disappearance of comradeship within the party and loss of abilities among the rank and file members to influence the party's activities.

Since the party and the soviets play important roles in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, one may first examine the Leninist understanding of the party and its relationship with the soviets and then evaluate Gorbachev's stand on these issues. According to Lenin the Communist Party is the highest form of class organisation of the proletariat, armed with a revolutionary theory and knowledge of the laws of revolution. The party is not something external to the working class. The party is a part of the class, closely bound up with all best elements of the working class, their experience, their selfless devotion to the cause of the proletariat. He was very critical of theories of spontaneity and spontaneism in the working class movement. To Lenin, the party should act as the vanguard of the proletariat—as its general staff—which can guide the working class in its most complicated struggle against the rule of capital. Lenin considered that the party is an instrument in the hands of the proletariat for achieving and for consolidating and expanding the dictatorship of the proletariat. He holds that it is impossible to think of the proletarian dictatorship in the absence of the leading role of the party. To quote Lenin, "the Bolsheviks could not have maintained themselves in

power for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years, without the strictest, truly iron discipline in our party and without the fullest and unreserved support of the latter by the whole mass of the working class, that is, by all its thinking, honest, self sacrificing and influential elements capable of leading or carrying with them the backward strata".⁷³ He makes the same point clear when he says, "without an iron party tempered in the struggle, a party capable enjoying the confidence of all that is honest in the given class, without a party capable of watching and influencing the mood of the masses, it is impossible to conduct such a struggle successfully".⁷⁴

In spite of the significance he attributed to the role of the party, Lenin did not consider that the party is the only instrument in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Along with the party there are many non party organisations like the trade unions, cooperatives, komsomols and the soviets. Among them, Lenin attributed state power to the soviets of the workers, peasants and soldier deputies. The soviets constitute the political base of the Russian socialist system. To quote him, "the democratism of Soviet power and its socialist nature are expressed in the fact that the supreme authority is vested in the soviets, which are made up of the representatives of the working people (workers, soldiers and peasants) freely elected and removable at any time by the masses, hitherto oppressed by Capital, that the local soviets freely amalgamate on the basis of democratic centralism into a single federal union as represented by the Soviet power of the Russian republic, that the Soviets concentrate in their hands not only the legislative power and supervision of law enforcement, but direct enforcement of the laws through all the members of the soviets with a view to gradual transition to the performance of the legislative functions and state administration by the whole working population".⁷⁵

The party as well as the soviets constitute indispensable transmission belts in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat. If the party is the class conscious organisation the soviets are the state power of the socialist Russia. Hence the study of their relationship turns into a study of the state and the conscious ruling class within the Socialist Russia. In capitalist and precapitalist societies characterised by the existence of antagonist interests within the dominant coalition, the state becomes relatively autonomous of the classes. Such autonomy is indeed necessary

for all those societies. But, this need not be so in the socialist set up, where the dictatorship of the proletariat is well consolidated. Since there is absence of antagonistic interests within the ruling coalition led by the proletariat, the state in socialist set up can be transformed into direct instruments promoting the interests of the working class. As Marx said in his *Critique of Gotha Programme*, "It is by no means the aim of the workers to set the state free. . . freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it".⁷⁶ It, however, presupposes existence of a party of class conscious proletariat capable of understanding the short term and long term interests of the working class. Such a party should exercise ideological hegemony over all other mass organisations. It should be kept in mind that the soviets are not purely proletarian organisations. In addition to workers they also include peasants, soldier deputies and the intelligentsia. As in the case of other non party organisations, ideological and intellectual standard of the members of the soviets do not match that of its advanced detachment. Hence there arises the necessity of the leading role of the party. Since the soviets on their own cannot undertake all the tasks necessary for the development of communist society, continuous guidance from the party becomes essential. As Lenin points out, "To forget the distinction between the advanced detachment and the whole of the masses which gravitate towards it, to forget the constant duty of the advanced detachment of raise ever wider strata to this advanced level, means merely to deceive oneself, to shut one's eyes to the immensity of our tasks and to harrow down the tasks".⁷⁷

The leading position of the party however does not negate the existence of non party organisations like Soviets. All transmission belts have their roles to play in the spheres allotted to them. Party combines the work of mass organisations of the proletariat and direct their activities towards the ultimate goal of communism. The relationship between the party and the soviets should be dialectical. It is the responsibility of the Party to see that non party organisations accept the leading role voluntarily and never feel that they are subordinated to the party. This aspect was beautifully explained by Stalin who clearly understood that "the party cannot lead the class if it is not connected with the non party masses, if there is no bond between the party and non party masses, if the party enjoys no moral and political credit among the masses".⁷⁸ He sees the possibility of conflict between the party and the ruling class, if party turns bureaucratic or if it ceases to be self critical or if the masses did not raise

to a level where they can voluntarily accept party's viewpoint. In case the party imposes its decision arbitrarily then open conflicts may develop between the party and non party organisations, including the soviets.⁷⁹ In case of fulfilment of all necessary conditions, the soviets do not feel the party's guidance as unwanted intervention, since the party instead of demeaning their status would only encourage them to utilise all their powers in legislation, execution and implementation of party's policy. When the relationship is dialectical the party gets more and more benefited by the continuous feed back that it gets from the day-to-day experience of the Soviets and other mass organisations.

Here it needs to be mentioned that among other things, the ability of the party to raise to the status of a leader of the class is based on the way the party is organised. It is not merely the goals which separate a proletarian party from bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties. It is the structure, composition and the process of working which differentiate proletarian party from other parties. Unless the party is organised on the basis of democratic centralism and collective leadership, it cannot be called a Marxist Leninist party. What is the real essence of democratic centralism? General principles such as lower party bodies obeying the higher party bodies and minority submitting to the majority do not constitute the 'essence' of democratic centralism as is generally conceived. They only refer the form in which the party has to be organised. Such principles, in formal sense, exist even in bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties. In Lenin's language democratic centralism means 'fusion of proletarian democracy with centralism'. It is the 'proletarian democracy' which distinguishes democratic centralism from bourgeois centralism. Democratic centralism is achieved when organisational centralism is built upon the foundations of proletarian ideological centralism. As such struggle to develop ideological centralism is the basic condition for the prevalence of democratic centralism in the party. In the words of Shibdas Ghosh, "this ideological centralism grows out of the struggle to develop one process of thinking, uniformity of thinking, oneness in approach and singleness of purpose based on Marxism Leninism and dialectical materialism, not only on economic questions but on all questions covering all aspects of life".⁸⁰

Closely connected to this is the concept of collective leadership which is generally mistaken for the majority decision or the decision of all members of the party or of its higher bodies. According to Leninism

collective leadership means the collective knowledge of all the members of the party. All members of the party contribute to collective knowledge of the party through their personal experiences and struggles. Since experiences and knowledge acquired therefrom differ from one to another, there should be freedom for all members to express their viewpoints without any inhibitions. In course of dialectical interactions among all members of the party, this collective knowledge of all members of the party gets expressed and personified in the highest form through one person. The criterion for the existence of collective leadership in the party is precisely this "concrete and personified form of expression—through an individual of the collective knowledge of all the members of the party derived through conflict and interaction of ideas and experience not only on political and economic questions but on question covering all aspects of life."⁸¹ The views expressed by that leader is not going to be merely a personal view of that individual. It is the highest personified expression of the whole party. To recognise the leading role of the individual is not against collective leadership. To be more precise, collective leadership is negation of individualism. Individualism having its base in the private property mental complex does not allow whole hearted appreciation of a correct and valid idea in case they contradict the personal interests of the party members. In a true Communist party the members identify or at least voluntarily subordinate their personal interests to the interests of the party and the class. Here the leadership which emerges out of the internal struggle of the party in all aspects—organisational, intellectual and moral aspects—would be accepted by all conscious members of the party. Voluntary acceptance of the ideas of such leadership by other leaders and cadres is not an indication of blindness or hero worship: but it is a concrete manifestation of the development of proletarian democracy within the party.

After such elaborate discussion on party and other related questions it may be understood that,

1) Gorbachev was wrong in considering that the intervention of the party in all affairs is responsible for diminishing the status of the soviets and other mass organisations. If a party is really a proletarian party, then, its guidance is not inconsistent with the role of other non party organisations. Only when the party loses its leadership and turns bureaucratic in its attitude then alone will conflict develop between the party and other transmission belts. The solution then is not one of limiting the role of the

party but of overcoming its defects and of becoming a real vanguard of the people.

2. Lenin always saw the Communist Party as the highest class organisation of the proletariat. The concept of the Party of all people is alien to Leninism. Lenin considered that party is necessary so long the classes continue to exist and all the workers do not develop to the status of its advanced detachment.

3. Lenin's party is not merely a party of the like minded people, Lenin's concept of democratic centralism is not simply to discuss and then accept the decision of the majority. It is not proper to think of democratic centralism without securing ideological centralism in the party. So also, in the absence of ideological centralism it is futile to talk of collective knowledge within the party. Similarly, it is wrong to give populist slogans such as 'democracy' and 'freedom' without providing the people the knowledge as to what such terms should mean to the proletariat and how they differ from bourgeois and petty bourgeois interpretations. Confusing the workers with supra-class slogans is virtually a negation of the spirit of Leninism.

Conclusion

In the light of Gorbachev's 'Perestroika' an attempt is made in this chapter to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the dialectics of state, economy and classes in the socialist set up. Historical evidences and classical Marxist sources are approached and cited to examine the socialist content of the economic and political reforms initiated by the new regime. The overall conclusion at which one is forced to arrive after such a thorough evaluation is that the Gorbachev's perestroika is a great leap backward in the advancement of socialism in Russia. Despite all his socialist rhetoric, Gorbachev's policy is a major deviation from Leninism.

We have not arrived at this conclusion just because some of the policies that Gorbachev initiated have no sanction in classical Marxist literature. We know that classics cannot provide solutions for each and every problem that may crop up in any and every society. No Marxist would deny the necessity of creative application of Marxism to the

concrete conditions. However, every revisionist interpretation should not be justified as creative Marxism. How does a revisionist differ from a creative Marxist? A creative Marxist thinker is one who on the basis of Marxist Leninist methodology comprehends correctly the contradictions of the existing society. On the contrary a revisionist is one who deviates from the fundamentals of Marxist Leninist philosophical approach. A revisionist policy in praxis takes the society away from the goal of classless and stateless communist society.

We call Gorbachev a revisionist because he approaches the problems of developed socialism from non Marxist Leninist angle. There is no element of Marxist creativity in his reforms. What he actually does in the name of creative application of Marxism Leninism is the indiscriminate borrowing of the primitive methods which were relevant to the Russia of early 1920s to solve the problems of the modern advanced socialist Russia. In praxis, his reforms widen the sphere of commodity production and speculation, create an idea of profit motive among the workers, reestablish private ownership of land, weaken the central authority over all administrative and economic bodies and introduce bourgeois values and their rights and liberties in the name of socialist democracy.

While being critical of Gorbachevism for its anti Marxist-supra class approach to the problem of socialism, it should be admitted that it was not really Gorbachev who gave birth to revisionism in Russia. Modern revisionism started with the 20th Congress of the CPSU where Khrushchev introduced the concepts of the state and the party of all people. From Khrushchev onwards, the venom of anti-Stalinism was used time and again to implement the revisionist policies in the socialist Russia. However, credit should go to Gorbachev who could take advantage of the low level of consciousness among the people and party member and come out with a comprehensive revisionist attack on all aspects of socialist society. If his policies are left unchecked, it would further strengthen the elements of capitalism already introduced by Gorbachev's predecessors. Together all of them may lead to intensification of crises which the socialist system may find it difficult to manage in the future. Though there is not enough evidence to call Russia a 'capitalist' or 'social imperialist' state, if at any time, by taking advantage of the conditions created by the revisionist regimes, the relations of

production and the motive force of production conducive to capitalism could develop and become dominant in the economy, then, in Russia the possibility of a counter revolution which would restore the rule of the bourgeoisie in the place of the dictatorship of the proletariat may not be overruled.

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