

## INTRODUCTION

- It is tempting to interpret the collapse of Socialism in the Soviet Union as being the result of the superiority of the Capitalist system over the Socialist system. However, that conclusion, in its circularity, begs the question. Being superior, Capitalism triumphed. Having triumphed it demonstrated its superiority!

There are flaws in these conclusions:

Superiority seems here to be defined in terms of survival. In an encounter with a tiger my chances of survival may be nil. The tiger in this case would have demonstrated its superiority. However, the end result would be different if I had a rifle. Superiority, measured in terms of survivability, is therefore a relative concept which depends on circumstances.

Once superiority is defined independently of survival, there is no law of nature ensuring the survival of the superior. The Indian civilizations in Latin America were not necessarily \_inferior' to the Spanish civilization just because they did not survive the \_Christian' onslaught. The Roman civilization was quite adequate for centuries. It collapsed under the pressure of the barbarian tribes which were superior in strength but not necessarily otherwise. The Greek civilization did not collapse from being inferior. Nazi Germany could well have won World War II, not as a result of the superiority of its regime (even in the strictly military sense her superiority would have been the result of the inept pre-war English and French policies rather than that of her regime).

- From a different angle, the collapse of Socialism in the Soviet Union is sometimes described as the triumph of Justice over Tyranny, and Democracy over Totalitarianism. This however flows against the facts. It is not the Socialism of Stalin that collapsed, not even that of Khrushchev. It is the Soviet Union of Glasnost which collapsed. Moreover, revolutions have their stages. France still celebrates the 14th of July, the start of the French revolution. That revolution was accompanied by terror which caused the death of a great number of innocents. Such terror does not exist any longer and the France of today is not condemned for the terrorism of the French revolution. Similarly, the American revolution, remained quite compatible with Slavery. The United States of today, which celebrates that revolution, is nevertheless not considered as a country of slavery. Similarly the pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union had long stopped to be the country of concentration camps for dissidents<sup>1</sup>. That of Gorbachev was travelling in a direction of humanism and democracy when it started collapsing. The collapse is certainly not the victory of Justice over Tyranny, Civilization over Barbarism.

- It has also been said that the Soviet economy was stagnating because Socialism, with its utter inability to motivate people, cannot ensure the economic well-being of the society. There is no doubt that the Soviet Union was facing an economic crisis. Capitalism also is often facing crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> Khrushchev eliminated the concentration camps for dissidents. This did not prevent a relative small number of dissidents being condemned to jail sentences, ostensibly for crimes not related to dissidence. In reality they were political prisoners. According to 'Amnesty International', in the Unites States there are also some political prisoners. There are many more in England.

The one which hit the whole of the Capitalist countries in the thirties was of a graver nature than that which is hitting the Soviet Union.

Moreover, it is said that in the competition to develop the economy of a country, the Capitalist system did much better than the Socialist System. This reasoning is, once more, afflicted with flaws.

1) the third world is part of the Capitalist System. India, for instance is a democracy in the Western sense. Its economy is 'free' and regulated by the capitalistic market. It is nevertheless not developing speedily enough. The Latin American countries, except for Cuba, are totally subject to the western Capitalistic influence. This Capitalistic backyard is not faring well economically<sup>2</sup>.

2) The Soviet Union has scored some astounding economic successes. The post-war reconstruction of the country was achieved at an incredibly fast rate in spite of the odds constituted by a) the extent of the destructions caused by the war b) the absence of any external aid similar to that of the Marshall Plan c) the felt necessity of reaching military parity with the U.S. which was brandishing the nuclear bomb monopoly.

3) The supposed absence of motivation under socialism did not prevent the Soviet Union from being first in the construction of commercial jet airplanes, first in launching a satellite and able to produce a modern army with modern armaments. It is not much advertised that, even during the cold war years, the West regularly bought from the Soviet Union thousands of industrial patents.

4) No conclusions can be drawn unless it is certain that the economic competition between the two systems was developing fairly.

The collapse of Socialism in Eastern Europe therefore raises a number of important questions:

- Was Socialism in Eastern Europe bound to collapse?
- Is Socialism in any shape and form impracticable, or at least bound to be much less efficient than capitalism?
- Has the Socialist experiment in Eastern Europe been given a fair chance to develop and reveal its potential?
- Is there in the human nature something which makes Socialism an impossibility?
- Is it possible to make any brand of Socialism work and would it be better than capitalism?
- Were the regimes in Eastern Europe really Socialist?
- Is Socialism compatible with a market economy?

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<sup>2</sup> It may be argued that the economic backwardness of Latin America's countries is due to the lack of democracy, and not to its capitalist regime. The fact is that the lack of democracy in these countries is the direct result of the U.S. intervention. Each time one of these countries succeeds in establishing a democratic regime, here comes the U.S. with a military intervention to suppress it.

- Can there be Socialism without a command economy?
- Is a command economy bound to be inefficient?
- Is it bound to be undemocratic?

Other questions can also be raised and are a matter of historical record.

- How moral or immoral were the Soviet Union's foreign and internal policies, compared with the foreign and internal policies of the advanced capitalist countries?
- How democratic, or undemocratic, was Socialism in the Soviet Union?
- Can Socialism be as democratic as, or more than, capitalism in USA?

And finally the most important two questions:

- Why is it important to answer these questions, and what is the future of Socialism?

This work is an attempt at answering these question and, since Marxism guided the Bolsheviks theoretical and practical considerations, I will start with a chapter on Marxism.

## CHAPTER I

### **MARXISM AND SOCIALISM**

The Communist parties were inspired by the Marxist ideology. In the West, a very distorted view of Marxism is prevalent. Marxism is viewed as a theory that promotes violent class struggle. This theory is described as favouring the loyalty to the working class (some say to its Communist Party) over the loyalty to the country. It would be against private property and would favour uniformity of income regardless of merit. It is viewed as a theory putting the interest of the state over that of the individual. It is supposed to justify any act, however immoral, so long as it is in the interest of the working class (some critics say that the interest of the Communist party sufficed). The ideology is supposed to give little importance to the human spiritual aspect and concentrates on the material aspect etc.. etc.. Finally, Marxism is advocating the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' and is therefore in favour of an autocratic regime exerted by the working class (through its Communist Party).

It is impossible in a few pages to do justice to the Marxist theory. However, there is no need to present here a detailed expose of Marxism. It is enough to dispel some myths and to dwell with those aspects of Marxism which most affect the shape of the Socialist regime.

### **MARXISM AND PRIVATE PROPERTY**

The only private property, the elimination of which is advocated by Marxism, is the private property of means of production. Here also Marxism makes a distinction between means of production (tools) used exclusively by its owner, and tools owned by a person or a group of person but which are used by workers under the direct or indirect control of the owner of the means of production. It is the ownership of means of production by people not using them themselves which is the basis for salaried work which, according to Marxism, is a form of exploitation and slavery.

All other forms of private property would be allowed and could be transferred from generation to generation through inheritance. All property acquired through work and without using salaried labour has no blemish.

Marxism underlines the fact that private property of means of production can be enjoyed by a small minority of the population only because the vast majority of the population, being deprived of it, constitutes a market of salaried labour.

### **MARXISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE**

According to Marxism the interests of the workers clash with those of the Capitalists. A higher salary for the workers will result in lesser profits for the Capitalists. This is also true for a reduction in the number of hours of work in a week. This runs true for the worker's demands for vacation, improved security at work, pensions etc.. etc..

According to Marxism the workers have no interests in national wars. These wars are often dictated by the greed of the Capitalists for extending their markets and their access to raw material. Similarly the workers have no interest in the pursuit of colonial and imperial policies.

The interests of the workers differ from those of the Capitalists. This is reflected in the opposition between the policies the two classes are advocating, and represents therefore a class struggle. This class-struggle, according to Marxism, exists whether the workers are aware of it or not. It is evidenced when workers have recourse to strikes and when the State sides with the factory owners. It is evidenced in the legislation and the way it is applied by the justice system etc.. etc..

Marxism notices that, ever since the time of the shameful exploitation of child labour in the mines, progress in the social conditions of the working class has been realised in the face of the relentless opposition of the owners of the means of production and of the state apparatus which sided with them. This opposition often took the form of shooting on demonstrating workers.

The workers are urged by Marxism to resist the Capitalist exploitation and to overthrow the Capitalist regime and replace it by Socialism. The workers are urged to be aware of the political tricks played on them by the Capitalists who often manage to mask a policy in their interests to present it as a policy of national interest. Marxism states that the best way to understand the true meaning of the political events is to interpret them in the light and knowledge of the class struggle.

The overthrow of the Capitalist regime is not supposed to be the result of a "coup" organized and executed by the Socialist Party. It would only occur when the party would enjoy the support of the majority of the population. The revolution is essentially the transfer of power from the Capitalist class to the Working class heading an anti-capitalist coalition. The degree of violence accompanying the revolution would depend on the degree and form of the Capitalist resistance to the will of the people. Marxism surmises that the Capitalist class will not surrender power peacefully<sup>3</sup>.

The Capitalist is not hated as an individual. It is not asked that he be killed or jailed. What is asked is that it be understood that he is an exploiter not by his own nature but by the nature of the Capitalist regime.

## **MARXISM AND ALIENATION**

The 'theory' of alienation is an integral part of Marxism. A worker who does not own the tools he works with and has no control over his production, is alienated from them. It would therefore be the role of Socialism to eliminate this alienation. This, presumably, can be done by the social ownership of means of production and by giving to the worker a decisive voice in the management of the place of work.

Similarly, a 'bourgeois' who, possibly, could have been a painter, owns instead a number of expensive paintings. In his pursuit of profits, he is, possibly, alienated from the development of his artistic potential.

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<sup>3</sup> Marxism does not exclude the possibility of a peaceful transition from Capitalism to Socialism, though not for the first country to become Socialist. Krushchev stated an opinion that the European democracies could become Socialist without a violent revolution.

In short every man has a potential for developing his knowledge, his culture and his abilities. According to Marxism, the Capitalist society is not geared to ensure the best condition so that each person fully realizes his own potential. Man is alienated from his 'blooming' potential. It would be the role of socialism, with its opposition to war, racial discrimination, poverty etc.. not only to provide good material conditions for everyone, but also to have a concern for the best development of every individual.

To tell each one what to do, where to work, how to spend his time would constitute a gross alienation of his personality and, as such, would be totally contrary to the letter and spirit of Marxism.

### **MARXISM AND THE INDIVIDUAL**

The reproach that Marxism rates the interest of the state higher than that of the individual is a red herring. All regimes do that in various degrees. Sending young people to war for 'the protection of the interests of the country' is of course the ultimate in subordinating the interest of the individual to the perceived collective interest of the country. Similarly, in most countries, private property may be taken away (with compensation) for the general interest (for instance, houses may be destroyed to make way for roads).

Marxism is accused of having little regard for human rights; they could be sacrificed in the State interest. This is untrue. Marxism has so little regard for the state that it preconizes the disappearance of the state under Communism. According to Marxism the State is an instrument of class struggle. Once Socialism is victorious and has no longer internal and external enemies, the State is to "wither away". This concept is not as simplistic as it sounds. We need not dwell longer on it. Suffice to say that to free the individual from any form of servitude and alienation is the main aim of Marxism.

### **MARXISM AND MORALITY**

Marxism does not deny morality and its importance. What it denies is the absolute character of morality. Marxism observes that morality changes with time. It is a relative concept. It was moral in the past to own slaves (even the Bible allows it). Today it is immoral. It is today moral to employ salaried workers; tomorrow, says Marxism, it will be recognized universally as a form of exploitation and slavery, and will become immoral. To steal was moral in Sparta provided it was done artfully.

It is difficult to contest the truth of the Marxist observation on the relativity of morality. However Marxism can indeed be criticized for not having stressed the fact that morality does not evolve erratically. To steal, for instance, is generally immoral. It has been so for millennia. Though considered a measure to protect private property, the moral condemnation of stealing will remain true even in a Socialist society whether to protect the social property or the legitimate property of each individual. The immorality of killing has long been recognized, and Socialism does not intend to change the stigma attached to killing. There is therefore a morality towards which humanity is steadily tending and which, in this sense, has something of an absolute character.

Nonetheless, while 'noticing' the relative character of morality, Marxism is advocating a line of action devoted to the best traditions of humanism. In this sense, Marxism is highly moral. Most of

the Marxist leaders, including Karl Marx, lead an untainted personal life. Marx, in particular, was a reliable friend, a faithful husband, a tender father and a man of his word. He lived modestly and, at times, would have starved if not for the help of his long life friend Frederik Engels. Nobody had ever accused Marx of lying, stealing or cheating.

It is worth noticing that most of the Marxist leaders, including Marx himself, were never workers and did not come from families of workers. Their motivation was moral. They were indignant at the exploitation to which workers are subjected and they could not suffer the injustice of the Capitalist regime. Morality is therefore at the root of a commitment to Marxism and, more specifically, at the root of the commitment to Communism by party members who, intoxicated by the beauty, generosity and universality of their dream, refused to believe in the existence of a terror regime in the Soviet Union, that is until it was revealed by Krutshchev<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> It has been recognized that the Communists played the most active role in the resistance against the Nazi occupation. More than any other group, they displayed a spirit of sacrifice and dedication. This fact begs for an explanation. Was the dedication to the people, the country, or was it to the party? And if the latter case is true, then what creates such a dedication, what validates it in the views of the member of the Communist Party?

Vivian Gornick became disillusioned with the Communist parties in the fifties. The next two quotations are taken from her book "The Romance of American Communism", Basic Books Publishers, New York, 1977. They help to answer the questions raised in the preceding paragraph.

At the indisputable center of the progressive world stood the Communist Party. It was the Party whose awesome structure harnessed that inchoate emotion which, with the force of a tidal wave, drove millions of people around the globe toward Marxism. It was the Party whose moral authority gave shape and substance to an abstraction, thereby making of it a powerful human experiment. It was the Party that brought to astonishing life the kind of comradeship that makes swell in men and women the deepest sense of their own humanness, allowing them to love themselves through the act of loving each other. For, of this party it could rightly be said, as Richard Wright in his bitterest moments did nonetheless say: "There was no agency in the world so capable of making men feel the earth and the people upon it as the Communist Party." (p.9)

In another passage Vivian Gornick writes:

It seems to me the real point about Communists is: they were like everybody else, only more so. What was in them is in all of us, only more so. In them, as in the artist, the proportions of response were writ large. In them, the major spiritual and intellectual current of their time ran strong instead of weak. In them, the scattered need for a serious life cohered.. They feared, hungered and cared *more*. They were indifferent to nothing, they had opinions on everything, they responded with intensity. Their overriding impulse was toward the integration of life - human and elemental. This impulse was coupled with great emotional energy - it is the thing which still characterizes most of them, those who are yet alive to tell the tale: enormous life energy - an energy whose forward thrust had, sorrowfully, not sufficient distinguishing controls.

..The Communist experience was, both in its glory and in its debasement, an awesome move toward humanness; an immense and tormented effort of the heart, will and brain that cried out, "I must have justice or I will die." In this sense, the Communist experience is of epic proportion, arousing to pity and terror. It is a metaphor for fear and desire on the grand scale, always telling us more - never less -of what it is to be human.(pp. 22-23)

Finally, it is interesting to quote from the same book a testimony about Communists given by a person who always was and remained opposed to Communism. Vivian Gornick writes:

In July of 1962 Murray Kempton spoke at a rally in New-York that had been called to protest the McCarran act. The hall was packed with Communists. Kempton, a Cold War liberal and long-time antagonist of the Communists, said:

## MARXISM AND DEMOCRACY

Marx was a staunch defender of democracy. Though he subjected the Capitalist (bourgeois) concept of democracy to a ruthless and caustic analysis, he defended democracy as the most appropriate system within Capitalism to allow the workers to improve their lot, to organize and, eventually to overthrow the Capitalist regime. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, to be instituted in the Socialism regime, would be more democratic than the bourgeois democracy by leaps and bounds. This question will be considered later in more detail. Suffice it to say that according to Marx, it is not enough to give workers the opportunity to vote once every few years - in conditions where he is influenced into voting for candidates with policies adverse to the workers' interests - According to Marx, real democracy cannot exist as long as the workers are alienated from the tools they work with and from the products of their labour. In a Socialist Society, according to Marx, there would be a constant input from the worker as to the management of the factories, the disposition of the products and the running of the State (till it wither away).

## MARXISM AND RELIGION

In the measure to which the official churches have stood in support of Feudalism and Capitalism, religion could have been considered as 'the opiate of the people'. This is true, but is not the whole truth. It cannot be denied that the Christian teaching, for instance, is pregnant with notions of Justice, equality and social or communal property. This led Frederik Engels to write that a time can come when the 'Salvation Army' would become a most threatening organization to Capitalism. The fact remains that Marxism has not sufficiently stressed that Christianity, at least in the form it had in its beginnings, is more compatible with Socialism than with Capitalism.

Marxism is an atheist philosophy and, as such, is opposed to religion. However, never did Marx preach the forceful elimination of religion. Religion, for the individual, was to be a private matter of no concern to the State.

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"I have known many Communists in my life. I have not known them as criminals. I knew them once as activists - and we had our quarrels. Someday, if you are ever put back on your feet again, I hope we may quarrel again. But in the interim I would like to say this: This country has not been kind to you, but this country has been fortunate in having you. You have been arrested, you have been followed, you have had your phones bugged, you have had your children fired, you have had everything done to you that can be done to make life as difficult as possible. Throughout this, I can think of number of you I have known who have remained gallant, and pleasant and unbroken.... Our children's children will someday walk together in the light and they will do so because numbers of you have done what you could to keep your courage and your patience.... I salute you and I hope for times to be better." (pp. 256-257)

## CHAPTER II

### **SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST PARTIES**

At the time when the Bolshevik party was formed in Russia, the European Socialist movement was divided into a number of different ideological tendencies. There was, however, general agreement that the collective ownership by the people of the means of production (land, factories etc..) was a pre-condition for Socialism<sup>5</sup>.

Of all the differences, two were outstanding and, more than any other, lead to the split of the socialist movement into Social-democratic and Communist parties. The first concerned the question of war and peace, the second the question of organization, discipline and party democracy.

### **SOCIALISM AND WAR**

World War I was not an accident resulting from an assassination incident at Sarajevo. It was an horrifying catastrophe the occurrence of which could be predicted with astonishing precision. The socialist movement saw it coming and, long before the Sarajevo incident, asked the socialists in the Austro-Hungarian Empire to do their utmost to prevent their country from attacking Serbia and thereby unleashing a world war. As matters turned out, this was precisely the way the war started.

In the marxist understanding of societies, there should be a world-wide brotherhood of workers. The slogan "Working men of all countries, unite" resulted from this belief. With such an understanding a French worker should not be the enemy of a German worker and they should not fight one another. Socialists should therefore vote against the military budgets in their respective countries. They should oppose war and refuse to participate in it.

This position was at first adopted by all the Socialist parties. However, in the early decade after 1910, and as war was becoming nearer, most Socialist parties felt very uncomfortable with such a policy. The national frenzy, which was being encouraged in all the involved countries by their respective establishments, was such that a socialist party advocating resistance to war could lose much of its following. Finally, the socialist parties joined the nationalistic frenzy, voted in each country for the military budget and asked the workers in their respective country to do their patriotic duty \_in the defence of the motherland!. In most Socialist parties, minorities opposed such a policy which they branded opportunistic and chauvinistic and a betrayal of the Socialist spirit of internationalism.. These minorities were the cores of the future Communist parties.

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<sup>5</sup> The form collective ownership of the means of production should take, was the subject of numerous discussions. In particular, the question was raised as to the significance of the transfer of the means of production to state ownership. Would this lead to Socialism or to State Capitalism. What are the differences between the two and how to ensure that Socialism would not degenerate into State Capitalism?

In this sense the Communist parties were founded by men so deeply attached to the idea of the brotherhood of working-men as to go to jail and risk their life, rather than encourage a worker or a peasant from one country to shoot at a worker or a peasant of another country.

This stand, by those who were to become the communists of after-war, was not restricted to the Bolsheviks. The German socialists, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg headed the trend in Germany.

## **SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY**

The different attitudes on the matter of war, had split the socialists all over the world and, at the time, was the only difference that counted. However, had the split been restricted to that matter and it may have been possible for the socialist international to heal its wounds after World War I. It was Lenin who internationalized a difference which was local to the Russian socialist movement and raised it to a matter of principle. This had unfortunate consequences.

The socialist movement in Russia had split into two parties, that of the Mencheviks, meaning minority, and that of the Bolsheviks, meaning majority. Minority and majority are not significant in this instance in view of the fact that the split occurred at a congress in which some delegates had unstable positions and switched frequently from one fraction to the other. The difference on organizational principles can be summarized as follows:

- 1) On the question of membership, the Mencheviks wanted to bestow it on whoever was prepared to pay the membership fee. The Bolsheviks wanted to restrict it to those who, in addition, were prepared to actively militate and implement the policy of the party.
- 2) On the question of the determination of delegates to the congresses, the Mensheviks insisted that they be chosen by general elections. The Bolsheviks wanted a more complicated system in which authority would flow from top to bottom.
- 3) According to the Bolsheviks, the political line followed by the party had to be defended by all members whether they agreed on it or not. Freedom of dissension was restricted to the period of party congress preparation. Once the party congress adopted a line it had to be defended and implemented, in and out of the party, by supporters and opponents of the line alike.

On the second point it looks as if the Bolshevik were opposed to democracy inside the party. The reality was somewhat different. The Bolsheviks underlined the fact that their position only concerned a clandestine socialist party. Once the party would become legal, election of delegates to the congress would then be in order. Lenin argued that, when the electors have no possibility of properly knowing the candidates, elections are not an expression of democracy. In times of clandestinity, not only was it difficult to know personally the candidates, but the ability to resist police pressure in case of arrest, was essential. The history of the past 'encounters' between a candidate and the police are, for security reasons not known to the common members while being known to the higher hierarchy of the party. The arguments in favour of each of the two stands were lengthy. The reasons advanced by Lenin against elections in the clandestine case, were serious and could not be dismissed easily. There was however a danger that this stand could later be the cause of underestimation of some forms of party internal democracy.

The fact was that immediately after World War I, the dissenting fractions of the socialist

movement made no effort to heal the wounds. The Communist International adopted organisational rules which, in a way, perpetuated on an international scale the schism that had developed in Russia between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The success of the Bolshevik revolution was considered to be due, in no small part, to the better principles guiding the Bolsheviks. It was therefore concluded by Lenin that no socialist country could lead a successful socialist revolution unless it was organized in a manner similar to that of the Bolshevik party.

It was therefore possible for a socialist party to oppose the Communist International not in relation to the building of Socialism in the Soviet Union, but because of the lack of democracy in that International and its imposition of organisational rules on the individual parties joining that International.

At a time when there was some hope for socialist revolutions all over Europe, details of organization could play a decisive role. The Communists found it natural, in such conditions, to restrict their efforts for unity to those supporters of socialism who had a full understanding and sympathy for the bolshevik organisational methods that, apparently, have proven to be successful.

This attitude had many flaws.

- The restrictions on unity did not have to be accompanied by manifestations of disrespect and hate against those socialists who disagreed with the Bolshevik organisational principles.
- When it became evident that the time for the European Socialist revolution had not yet come, the unity of socialists should have become more important than a settlement over matters of party organization. It may well be that the differences over party organization reflected a difference in attitude and, possibly, of degree of attachment to socialism. If such was the case, a disregard of the organizational differences would not have prevented other differences to occur. Even if this was true, it would have been much better for the Socialist movement to have the differences of attitude fought over other matters than organisational ones.
- In answer to the foreign military intervention and its support to terror tactics, the Bolsheviks introduced the regime of terror against the enemies of Socialism in Russia. It was then extended and amplified by Stalin against any dissenter, even when he was a sincere socialist, and Bolshevik at that. Such a terrorist regime which had nothing to do with the party organisational principles came to be understood by the non-Bolshevik socialist as the natural consequences of these principles. The non-bolshevik socialists claimed that Stalin's regime would have been impossible were it not for the wrong party organisational rules. As a result, the question of support for a Socialist regime could be eclipsed by the condemnation of the terror regime in the Soviet Union.

The fact was that a regime of terror against dissent should be condemned by all socialists, whatever be their opinions concerning party organization. The fact was that, according to the Bolsheviks themselves, the party operating now in conditions of legality, had to resort to the democratic practice of election of the party officials from bottom to top. This should have eliminated the most important difference among the socialists, though many other differences would still have remained. Without the regime of terror the unity movement could have gained irresistible strength among the party members and there could have been little option for the socialist leaders of various nuances other than advocating the support of the only socialist country.

The bolsheviks always asserted that socialist democracy should be different from what they called

bourgeois democracy. Bourgeois democracy relies on the multiplicity of parties and on election of legislative chambers. The people, ill-informed and manipulated by the media, cast the vote every so many years to decide what section of the Establishment will rule the country<sup>6</sup>. In contrast, under Socialism, the people, guided by the socialist ideology, will exert its direct rule by casting votes and by participating and controlling the management of the Socialist society. This is not what occurred in the Soviet Union.

The Socialist-Communist split which occurred in 1917 at the international level, deepened with time. Later, the Socialists saw in the Stalinist elimination of dissent a reflection of the lack of party democracy in the Communist parties, and the natural result of the wrong organizational principles adopted by the bolsheviks. The Communists interpreted the opposition by the Socialists to the Soviet regime as the reflection of the bourgeois influence on the Socialist leaders, the same influence that made them support World War I. This belief was later reinforced when the French Socialist party adopted policies which in fact facilitated the Franco victory in Spain. It must be put on record that, during the war, the Communist contribution to the active resistance against the Nazi occupation was far greater than that of the Socialists. It was explained by the better organization of the Communist parties. This tended to confirm the Communists in the belief of the virtues of their organizational principles.

The absence of 'civilized' relations between the Socialists and the Communist leaders prevented the views of the Social-Democrats to ever be given proper consideration by the Communists.

### **COMMUNISM AS A RELIGION**

A person who supports the Communist Party and is prepared, occasionally, to participate to some of its activities, is a Party sympathiser. A sympathiser is not subject to Party discipline. He may disagree with some secondary aspects of the Party policy and is free to express his disagreement.

A member is a person who not only approves the general aspects of the Party's policy. He must, in addition, respond to a 'call' which is not very different in nature from the religious call a priest responds to when joining priesthood. In a very real sense, a Party member is a priest of Communism, no less than some men are priests of the Catholic religion.

In the first place, party members believe in Marxism-Leninism (Stalinism has of course been dropped since Khrushchev. As to Engelism, the term is never used. Engels is mostly honoured in association with Marx). Marxism is an attractive theory and, as far as Communists were concerned, has been proven right by Lenin in his successful leadership of the Bolshevik Party, and in the creation of the first socialist state. Therefore, in their view, Marxism has ceased being a theory which, as long as it is not contradicted by reality, may be a good inspiration. Marxism IS the reality. For many Communists the correctness of a policy is not to be judged on its own merits but in the measure in which appropriate quotations from Marx, Engels or Lenin appear to support it.

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<sup>6</sup> An aspect of the lack of democracy was illustrated in Louisiana where the people was given the choice of electing as a Governor either Edwards 'the crook' nominated by the Democrat Party, and the racist and Nazi David Duke nominated by the Republican Party. An election cannot be won without a costly campaign. This eliminates those candidates who, by reason of their honesty, fail to get financial support.

This attitude is not fundamentally different from that of many religious people whose arguments are loaded with Bible quotations. No doubt that Marx, Engels and Lenin deserve respect for their profound understanding and for their theoretical and political contributions. A right policy may be 'Marxist' but is not right just because it is Marxist. For many Communists, they will not be sure a policy is right unless they can associate it with Marxism.

There are therefore two different ways of being Marxist (or Leninist etc.). One can be Marxist in the sense that, having studied Marx's works, one concludes that Marx had a profound understanding of economics and history and that his conclusions were generally correct. It is therefore probable (but not certain) that his predictions will come out to be true.

A Communist is Marxist in a different way. He believes that Marx has discovered the exact laws of economy, history and social evolution. Therefore no political conclusions can be true if it is not confirmed by Marxism. A conclusion believed to be Marxist and later proven to be wrong, either must have been wrongly derived from Marxism or, is somewhat fundamentally correct in spite of having the appearances of being wrong.

When two Communists differ, one of them at least must have a non-Marxist position. It is as if every political problem can be solved, provided one has a correct understanding of Marxism-Leninism. Many Communists are reluctant to accept that some problems may have more than one correct solution. For most of them, there is only one correct solution, that of the Party.

It is difficult for a Communist to become a dissenter. Since the leaders have in Marxism-Leninism the perfect political tool, and since they have accumulated so much experience at using that tool, the likelihood of their making a political mistake must be very small. The fact that the Soviet Union's accomplishments had been apparently so great had increased the members' trust in their leadership and reduced their need for questioning the leaders' policies

## **COMMUNIST AS A PRIESTHOOD**

The Communist Party's demands on its member are heavy. A member must behave in a way that reflects well on the Party. He must be honest, devoted to his family, his friends and his country, be an example of fortitude and of dedication to his co-workers. In addition he must submit to the party discipline and actively support the Party's policies, a thing that, in time of illegality, may result in great hardships.

Why then should a person become a Party member? He does if he responds to an inner call. To become a member, and be prepared to accept the 'chores', and sometimes the associated dangers, is even more remarkable than the similar decision by a man deciding to become a priest. The Communist's decision is of a more idealistic nature. In general he looks for no reward in this world or in the next (we are speaking of the situation before it became advantageous to be a member of the corrupted Soviet Communist Party). The story told by a number of ex-Communists show that the motivation of each one of them was his firm belief that in adhering to the party he was contributing to the realization of the most beautiful dream conceived in man's history: an end to exploitation and undeserved privileges. An end to racism and chauvinism. The establishment of the brotherhood of workers as the first step to the brotherhood of man. The creation of a society in

which there would be no underdogs and which will work towards the satisfaction of human needs and the blooming of each individual's potential. Now, that is worth dying for! And that is what drives a man to become a Party member.

This is an exceedingly important characteristic of a member. While his trust in the party and his leaders may be misplaced, while his uncritical approval of the Party's policies is to be condemned, he should be credited for his dedication and his readiness to incur the greatest sacrifices for an aim that deserves admiration - whether one thinks that aim attainable, or an utopia. The description of Communists as revengeful people thirsty for power, does not fit the bill. All we know, from their admirable role in the resistance to the German occupation in Europe, and from trusted previous insiders, testify to the high moral fibre of the members.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BUILDING OF SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY

The Russian revolution of November 1917 was led by a party (the Bolshevik party) committed to Socialism. It had an international and universal significance. International, because

- the dispossession of the 'bourgeoisie' and the aristocracy in Russia was bound to raise the fears of these classes all over the world and justify what they would consider as being a necessary intervention
- at the time, it was the firm belief of the Bolsheviks that the Socialist revolution in Russia could not succeed unless similar revolutions occurred in the most industrial countries. They were also convinced that the time was ripe for such a world revolution.

Universal, because of the nature of the dream motivating the Bolsheviks:

- Universal brotherhood of men to be based on the universal brotherhood of working people.
- No longer wars with the disappearance of armies and armaments. Realization of the Bible injunction to turn swords into ploughs.
- An end to friction between nations. No more chauvinism and complete equality between all nations. An end to colonialism and imperialism.
- The start of an era of abundance following the institution of Socialism which will allow a rationalization of production motivated by human needs rather than profits. There would therefore be a constant increase in the ability of the social production to, more and more, satisfy the needs of the population all over the world
- Suppression of salaried labour with the concomitant end of labour slavery. An end to the alienations that plagued the human individual potential for developing and blooming.

As a result of the epic nature of that dream, the Russian revolutionary activists felt an almost crushing responsibility towards the human race. For some, the end was so universal that it would justify almost any means.

The Bolsheviks faced therefore three main tasks: to take power, to keep power and to build a new Society. Though that last task was the most important one, it could not properly be addressed without taking care of the two first tasks. The foreign military intervention against the Bolsheviks<sup>7</sup> and the support of the interventionists to all the conservative and reactionary forces in Russia,

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<sup>7</sup> It is a matter of record that 14 countries militarily intervened against the Bolshevik revolution. Among them were Britain, France, Japan, the United States and the defeated Germany.

gave to the two first mentioned tasks a priority which diverted the efforts of the Russian revolutionary activists from the task of building a new society. Bolsheviks could do nothing unless they managed to retain power. This required the concentration of all their efforts.

That is how the party succumbed to the temptation of considering Socialism as realized by the dispossessing of the exploiting classes. The necessary measures to ensure that the alienations which accompanied that exploitation would be ended, ceased to be considered. What mattered was to defeat the invaders.

The fact is that Socialism is a rational system as opposed to a natural system. It is that rationality that is supposed to realize the humanism which inspires it. However, not being natural<sup>8</sup> and not having yet existed anywhere, there were no ready blue-prints for its implementation. There even were not enough guide-lines for developing such blue-prints. To many, it was clear that mistakes were bound to be made and that experimentation could not be avoided to sort out the valuable solutions. Experimentation could be made in space or in time. Different parts of the country could have different implementations, or still different implementations could be experimented for the whole country at different times. It would also be possible to chose what would seem a good option and to modify it according to the results.

These questions, that should have been prominent in the thoughts of the Bolshevik leaders, receded in the background for one important reason: they did not believe in the possibility of retaining power unless the revolution also succeeded in a more industrial country. The most likely candidate was Germany. The success of the revolution in Germany was considered more important than its success in Russia. The Bolshevik were prepared to sacrifice the success of their revolution, were they to be convinced that in doing so they would ensure the success of the German socialist revolution.

When, finally, the Bolsheviks decided to construct Socialism in one country, the time for discussing and experimenting had already passed. The struggle for keeping power had concentrated all means in the hands of the state, and the State was run by a party in which Stalin had secured dictatorial powers and went along with the view that Socialism was essentially the dispossession of the exploiting class, and this had been done.

Evidently, the Soviets<sup>9</sup> to which, at the start of the revolution, all power was supposed to be transferred, remained operating. This however was done under tight party control rather than under the people's control.

Though the Soviet Union renounced and denounced the Trotskyite theory of world revolution, and though the active foreign military intervention against the Bolshevik revolution ended in 1922, the

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<sup>8</sup> The elements of Capitalism have developed within the feudal systems through trades and commerce. Once the power was transferred to the 'bourgeoisie' there was no need to create a capitalist regime; the capitalist institutions were already there 'naturally'. The situation is different for a socialist regime. A party coming to power with the intention of instituting a Socialist regime, does not 'inherit' from capitalism elements of socialism. The nature of capitalism does not produce them 'naturally'. They have therefore to be created from 'scratch'.

<sup>9</sup> The Soviet is an institution created by the Russian people during the failed 1905 revolution. It is an elected local Committee from within which the people exerted direct local power.

industrial world remained hostile to the Soviet Union. The latter had good reasons to believe that the Establishments in the West sympathised with the fascist and Nazi regime which, through terrorist and dictatorial measures, had eliminated the Communist parties from the public life<sup>10</sup>. These establishments did not hide their hope that Nazi Germany would, in time, attack the Soviet Union to destroy its Socialist regime.

The foreign military intervention in Russia was resented by the people everywhere. The intervening armies had to deal with revolts in their own ranks. The effect of the intervention was to radicalize the population in the intervening country. So much so that Lloyd George, the English Prime Minister, expressed the fear that a continuation of the intervention, could result in the spread of the Soviet regime to England itself.

In short, the cessation of the military intervention was forced on the industrial countries by circumstances. It was natural therefore to believe that what they could not achieve at the time, they might try to achieve later, with the same or with other means.

It was essential for the security of the Soviet Union that she be prepared against military aggression. Such a preparation could not be achieved in a country devoid of heavy industry. The respite given to the Soviet Union by the failure of the foreign intervention, had therefore to be fully exploited in building, as fast as possible, a strong heavy industry.

### **SOCIALIST INDUSTRIALIZATION IN AN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY**

Capital is essential for the industrialization process. In the Soviet Union, capital was hardly available. Though the Soviet Union could, occasionally, obtain some loans, these were insignificant in comparison to the enormous amounts of capital that the country invested for its industrialization. Essentially, the poor and impoverished Soviet people was the only source of capital. In non-Socialist countries, capital was first accumulated in the hands of merchants, of land-owners moving to the field of business and thus becoming Capitalists. The process is at first slow and accelerates with time. The Soviet Union could not afford a slow rate of Capital accumulation. Capital had to be taken from the people, and this evidently caused enormous hardship. In a time of difficulties, during which the only thing the regime could give to the people was promises of better days, there was bound to be widespread dissatisfaction, a situation that could easily be exploited by an opposition, sincere or not.

The Soviet Union had no established traditions of democracy. Moreover, the Soviet leadership of the time was not trusting the people's ability to understand the need for such sacrifices. The foreign intervention - and the threat to resume it with the help of Nazi Germany - played a determining role in the skidding of the Soviet regime towards totalitarian rule. In no way does this remark diminish the responsibility of the leaders of the time in corrupting the regime. Soviets, subjected to the arbitrary Party rule, were prevented from playing their democratic and popular role.

### **SOCIALISM DOES NOT DELIVER**

Had the Soviet Union been an advanced industrial country, there would have been no difficulty

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<sup>10</sup> Fascist regimes also eliminated the Socialist and other non-fascist parties and popular organizations.

for the Soviet government to improve, quickly and by a large measure, the lot of the people. In a Capitalistic country, the industrial potential output is in general larger than the actual output. The existence of competition and free market, the necessity of avoiding full employment (so as to keep the salaries from increasing and to undermine the moral and the fighting spirit of the workers), the variability and volatility of some markets results in the various factories working at less than full capacity. A Socialist regime can, by its planning and control over the economy, reduce and eliminate unemployment, markedly increase the production and, in the short term convince the population of the advantages of the Socialist regime over the Capitalist one. In such a case, the people can easily tolerate a few cases of corruption. Moreover, in the case of immediate economic relief, the temptation of corruption is easy to resist.

Such an option was not available to the Bolsheviks; it was not available to Stalin. To build an heavy industry during a respite that could be short lived, was full of dangers. An heavy industry could not be created without heavy Capital investments, and the Soviet Union did not have the needed Capital. It could not obtain that Capital on loan without conditions which would interfere with the establishment of a socialist regime.

When the leaders demand that the people make great sacrifices, the people cannot tolerate corruption to the same degree. Economic corruption - as distinct from corruption of principles - and absence of delivery, form a dangerous mixture totally discrediting the leaders. When economic corruption became widespread the Party lost its credibility.

## CHAPTER IV

### CORRUPTION IN THE SOVIET UNION'S COMMUNIST PARTY

Corruption is generally considered to be the exploitation of a position of trust or of power for personal benefits, whether this takes the form, for instance, of imposing or just accepting bribes, or whether it is done legally within the laws.

It is not possible to totally eliminate corruption. Temptations surround everyone and, occasionally, even a Party member may succumb to it. In a society where such corruption is the exception, the damage caused is small. This was the case in the early years after the Bolshevik revolution. At the time, it was by no means certain that the Bolshevik revolution would succeed. To be a member of the Communist Party not only meant a dangerous and demanding commitment to the tasks of the day. It also meant being a prime target to the repression which would follow a possible failure of the revolution. It can safely be said that, generally speaking and at the time, a person had to be sincere and strongly motivated by his ideals to be a member of the Soviet Communist Party.

Most members of the party, including the leaders, not only were dedicated idealists, they were also purists imposing on themselves an ascetic life. Corruption by material temptations was almost non-existent. There, however, were other forms of corruption which, though less despicable, were no less corroding both the person who committed it, and the texture of the society. The leaders, and even the non-leading members of the Party, were susceptible to these forms of corruption.

### ENDS AND MEANS

When the Bolshevik took power, the Tsarist legal system collapsed. Its laws were no longer applicable. The only restraints on the behaviour of a Party member were his own sense of morality and of proper behaviour, and those derived from the Socialist principles he believed in. In addition, the party discipline imposed on him to act in ways which would be approved by the higher authorities of the Party.

The Socialist principles are permeated with humanism, and the behaviour of the party members generally reflected tolerance and the refraining from harsh measures. In a known instance, for example, a Tsarist general was caught while heading operations against the Bolsheviks. He was released on the promise that he would stop acting against them. The British official records acknowledge that the Bolsheviks did not commit acts of terrorism during the six first months of their revolution.

When, as a result of the foreign intervention, and the terrorism to which the white armies had recourse, the Bolshevik hold on Power was threatened, the question of means versus ends imposed itself on the thoughts of the members and of the leaders. The ends had an overwhelming importance. The establishing of a rational society devoid of exploitation and alienation, a society whose existence would encourage the liquidation of colonialism, imperialism and wars was such a grandiose aim that jeopardising it could not be forgiven. It was therefore essential, more so than in

a strictly national sense, to defeat the invaders and the internal forces they supported. Would the Party hesitate to use needed means, just because the \_meanness' of the means was at odds with the glory of the ends? Such a question had to be answered by the leadership for all the party, and by each individual Party member.

There were historic precedents for the use of corrupted means in the service of important aims. The inquisition used torture in the belief that, in doing so, it was defending the purity of the Christian doctrine. Most inhuman means were therefore used in the name of a religion in which the love of the neighbour was central.

More recently, and more to the point, leaders of the French revolution had proclaimed the Motherland to be in danger, and unleashed a period of terror against the Aristocracy and the holders of dissident views. The means of terror were used in defence of the ends "Liberty Equality and Fraternity".

The Bolsheviks, under Lenin's leadership, and following the attempt on Lenin's life and the assassination of a Bolshevik leader, proclaimed a \_red terror' ostensibly against the people's enemies. However, under a regime of terror characterized by summary justice, the misuse of power can hardly be avoided. Under the pressure of the foreign threat the humanistic spirit of Socialist justice was being corrupted.

### **DEMONIZATION OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT LEADERS**

The Bolsheviks had grounds for criticizing the leaders of the Social-Democratic parties. The latter supported the war efforts during World War I, and, at the end of the war, helped repress the revolutionary movements in Germany.

Criticizing these leaders was therefore proper and necessary. When this criticism takes the form of exposing their mistakes and uncovering the fallacies of their arguments, it helps clarify the understanding of the public. However, calling these leaders social-chauvinists, social-traitors etc... amounts to \_speaking to the converted'. Most supporters of the Bolsheviks delighted at such labels.

What is more important is to \_speak to the unconverted', to those who still believe in the sincerity of the social-democrat leaders. Such supporters of social-democracy would be more amenable to reason if the arguments were restricted to making points instead of uttering insults. True, the Bolsheviks were also discussing facts and principles. However, their language could repel the honest social-democrats, and could throw a shadow over the possible validity of their arguments.

During the war, many leaders of the newly formed Communist parties in Europe, had been supporters of \_the defence of their Motherland'. In Lenin's terminology, they had been social-chauvinists. This demonstrated that a \_social-chauvinist' could be brought to support the Socialist revolution. The process of bringing over to the Socialist revolution those social-democrats amenable to that evolution, was not helped by calling them names.

Finally, the demonization of \_social-democracy' made it easier later to demonize \_dissension' in the Soviet Union, even when the dissenters were proven Bolsheviks.

### **FORCING ON THE PEOPLE \_WHAT IS GOOD FOR THEM'**

Marxism does not favour the distribution of land to the peasants. An efficient exploitation of land requires the mechanization of agriculture, and it is not possible - and not efficient - to give machinery to a peasant to be used by him alone, when some of the machinery could service pieces of land much larger than that of an individual peasant.

At the time of the revolution, machines were rare. More to the point, the cooperation of the Social-Revolutionary Party with the Bolsheviks was conditioned to the distribution of land to the peasants. Finally, Lenin knew that this distribution corresponded to the peasants' wishes. Therefore, the Bolsheviks promised to distribute the land on the peasants and proceeded to do so after the revolution. The large domains were distributed but no legal papers recording the ownership were issued to the peasants.

Distribution of land does not represent an extension of socialism to the country-side. If land can be owned, it can be sold, and accumulated into larger stretches which may encourage the hiring of waged labour for private profit. Collectivisation could have been an extension of Socialism to the country-side. This would have been true if the '\_collective' (kolkhoz) was free to choose the crops it would produce, and would, in cooperation with other authorities, establish the amounts to be sold and their price. The kolkhoz should also take part in deciding what proportion of the crop has to pay for the services extended by the socialist state to the Kolkhoz in terms of social benefits (education, culture, health etc..).

The Bolsheviks under Lenin aimed at first to "hold the fort" until more industrialized countries would join the Socialist revolution. In the mean time, steps towards Socialism were made at a rate dictated by the economic situation and by the people's readiness to go ahead. Lenin had once explained to people who had never heard of it that '\_Socialism is equal to Soviets plus electricity'. He meant that in order to have a Socialist regime, the power must be in the hand of the people and exerted by them, while there must also be an increase of industrialization, and the reliance on modern technology to ensure a production adequate to the population's needs. Stalin replaced that understanding with a different equation: Socialism=heavy industry + party leadership. And party leadership soon became Stalin's dictatorship.

Stalin believed that the security of the country required the rapid creation of a powerful heavy industry. He was aware that the sacrifices this would require from the people would engender discontent and make the country vulnerable to the spread of dissension and to internal enemies. It would also impair the support the peasants were still giving the regime (or, in communist jargon, the alliance between the working class and the peasantry).

During Stalin's rule, dissenters were imprisoned or condemned to death. Regarding the problems in the country-side, forced collectivization was Stalin's answer to the difficulty. The poorest peasants would, presumably, be satisfied, and mechanization of the country-side would gradually transform the peasants into workers, the wealthier peasants, the Kulaks, would be '\_liquidated'. Opposition and discontent would be dealt with with a heavy hand, that is to say with terror. This could only work if political dissent was dealt in the same way. The principles of Socialism were being corrupted more and more. Instead of relying on the power represented by the support and trust of the population, Stalin had to rely on the state power.

## **THE IDEOLOGICAL CORRUPTION**

The construction of a Socialist society is a tremendous task. It is still more so when done without the benefit of experience accumulated during previous attempts in other countries. However, to reject essential criticism and dissent is the equivalent of stating that the party (Stalin) has the correct answer to all problems. The party (Stalin) tried therefore to convince the population that the problems were not as complicated as the dissenters were saying. Socialism, the party was saying, already existed in the Soviet Union. Socialism was therefore curtailed to the liquidation of the private ownership of means of production and to the spread of social benefits to the population. Since the power was totally centralized in the government hands, it ensued that the economy developed along centralized command lines. This also was taken as an indication of the Socialist character of society in the Soviet Union, the only country where the economy was centrally planned and controlled.

Prices were established without public input. Quality and variety of production were also matters in which the people had little to say. Conditions of work were handled by trade unions entirely controlled by the party.

The Marxist leaders, and later the Communist leaders, bitterly exposed the European powers for the many secret treaties that had been signed just before and during World War I. Secret diplomacy became a dirty word. The Communist leaders stated that, as a matter of principle, they would never have recourse to it. However, secret agreements were made with Germany in the twenties to allow her to build military prototypes to help her rearm or be prepared for a faster rearmament. In August 1939 the Soviet Union signed a treaty of non-aggression with Nazi Germany. Though the treaty was immediately made public, the negotiations were held in secrecy. More to the point, the treaty had secret codicils which were only discovered at the end of World War II. Independently of the value judgment that can be expressed about the treaty (which, without its codicils, can be justified<sup>11</sup>) the resort to secret diplomacy was a dangerous compromise with the principles and a sign of degeneration of the leadership (degeneration in terms of deviation from the socialist ideology).

## **CORRUPTION OF INTERNATIONALISM**

Marxist internationalism is based, as we saw it, on the brotherhood of workers of all nations. This was also the stated belief of the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik revolution was therefore considered as part of the world's socialist revolution rather than a specific Russian revolution.

The third International was to become the headquarters directing the world revolution. It was to have complete authority over all the Communist parties, including the Russian Communist Party. It could approve or disapprove the program of a Communist party. It could approve or disapprove the policy of a party. It could even dissolve any Communist party. All Communist parties were to obey the commands issued by the International. The International was made of representatives of all Communist Parties. Any single party had a small number of votes in the International. This was also true for the Russian Communist Party.

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<sup>11</sup> It has been proved (C. Leibovitz, 'The Chamberlain-Hitler Deal', not yet published but available through the author) that a deal was made between Hitler and Chamberlain giving Hitler a free hand in his dealings with Eastern Europe. It is remarkable that, on the one hand Hitler did not trust Chamberlain's ability to carry the deal and was afraid that Chamberlain, under the people's pressure, could be replaced by Eden, Duff-Cooper or Churchill, while, on the other hand, Stalin did not trust the British people in its ability to foil Chamberlain's plans.

In practice, the reputation of the Russian Communist party, and the influence resulting from having taken power, had made of the Russian Communist Party the dominant force in the International in Lenin's time. Stalin in his fight against dissension within Russia, was not about to allow dissension in the International. He could not run the risk of having it condemning his policies and his methods. He therefore had recourse to physical elimination of Communist leaderships of a number of Communist parties who were illegal in their own countries. This was relatively easy since the site of the International was in Russia, and many of the leaders of illegal Communist parties resided in Moscow to escape arrest in their homelands. In other words, they were in Moscow 'for their protection' and ended up being 'liquidated' on Stalin's orders. This was of course an extreme corruption of Internationalism. Since then, Internationalism, in Stalin's terminology, became a one-way concept. It obligated all Communist parties to defend the Soviet Union and its policies. It was not reciprocated by an obligation of the Soviet Union to request and respect the opinion of the community of Communist leaders all over the world.

Finally in the name of internationalism, the Soviet Union actively and militarily intervened in the internal affairs of the 'Popular Democracies'. The worst case was the suppression of the Dubcek movement toward a 'Communism with a human face'. Such a movement implied that, elsewhere in the Soviet sphere of influence, Communism lacked humanity. This was particularly true in Stalin's time and was, to a lesser degree, still true in Brezhnev's time. But the bureaucrats at the head of the Soviet Communist party had become corrupt<sup>12</sup> and preferred to believe that the regime they headed was beyond reproach. Dubcek had to go, even if the Soviet tanks had to enter Prague. In the last legislative elections in Czechoslovakia, which marked the end of the Communist Party's rule, the Communist party obtained close to 20% of the popular vote. In all likelihood, Dubcek, before the Soviet intervention, could have obtained close to 90%. The tragedy is that what was believed by the Soviet leaders to be a necessary measure to save socialism in Czechoslovakia was precisely what, more than anything else, produced there its final collapse.

### **MEANS AND NO ENDS**

It is bad enough when corrupted means are justified in the name of glorious ends. A point was reached when those means would be used with no possibility of such 'justification'. During the siege of Leningrad, for instance, and during about 900 days, the city withstood starvation and daily bombing. The number of victims, mainly from starvation, reached close to one million and half. The population's readiness to endure such sacrifices would have been unthinkable, were it not for the leadership of the Communist party whose member's share of the sacrifice was no less than that of the city's population. They gave an admirable example of dedication, patriotism and principled behaviour. That leadership was made of heroes, and it would have been only right to give them public recognition. However, when the city's blockade ended, many of them were arrested and taken away from public life. It seems that it was important for Stalin to eliminate the possible challenge to his leadership constituted by the public praise rightly deserved by Leningrad's leading Communists.

### **THE DILEMMA OF MORALITY VERSUS ABILITY**

Members of the Communist Party are expected to be politically alert, able to make the correct

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<sup>12</sup> The corruption here concerns the principles and the ideology. Economic corruption is an additional aggravation.

decisions which will ensure the success of the Party's policies and ensure the people's support for these policy. They are also expected to be a model of dedication, morality and readiness to take their share of the sacrifices imposed on the people. Often enough, a party leader, heading a local party authority, happens to be an excellent member as far as political *clairvoyance* is concerned, while not being as good at sharing the people's sacrifices. He thinks that the services he is giving to the country authorise him to help himself to some economic privileges. That same member may well be totally devoted to the party and the people, and may well, when called for, act as an hero and give his life for the party and the country. However, he likes good food, good living, and, may be, some romance, and would consider as dogmatic anyone who would raise the matter of his ethics at a time at which the political problems are so crucial, and his political leadership so well appreciated.

And what if the double criterion of ability *and* morality were to be applied, and, in consequence, many brilliant political leaders would be eliminated from leadership? Would not the harm done to the party be lethal?

The correct answer could be that exceptional politically gifted leaders should have minor '\_vices' tolerated, as long as '\_purist' leaders similarly gifted remain unavailable. The aim should be to have a politically gifted leadership above reproach from the ethical point of view.

The trouble is that, in the absence of real party democracy such un-ethical leaders can ensure their pereniality and remain at the helm, even when their political gift becomes dim or is surpassed by that of more able members. We then not only have corruption, but corruption without '\_justifying' ability.

Let us consider a party member heading a factory. He can be motivated by two main interests. He may act in a way that will ensure an apparent success of his local leadership even if this apparent success does not reflect the reality. He may also endeavour to apply creatively the party policy and serve the general interest of the people. It is important that local leaders be subject to popular control and be prevented from adopting self-serving policies.

The corruption of leaders may lead to the corruption of members. Then, with the development of many powerful centers of local corrupt interest, the party becomes a multiple centralized organ, instead of a singly centralized one. At the time of need, such a party may not act in unity in the service of the national interest. The party which in the incorrupt state is the glue of society with its multiple interests, may then become a factor in the paralysis of the executive. Centrifugal tendencies can then grow unchecked.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NATURE OF THE PRE-GORBACHEV SOVIET SOCIETY

A Socialist revolution is not necessarily a revolution bringing about a Socialist society. When a party has overthrown the Capitalist rule with the determined intention to build a Socialist society, that party has lead a Socialist revolution. That revolution may or may not end up in the creation of a Socialist society. The creation of a Socialist society is a lengthy process which starts with a Socialist revolution and then has to proceed in a long and sinuous path during which possibilities of regression are a constant threat. In particular, it could be overthrown before having had a chance of doing so. Its real socialist purposes may be subverted and the regime which follow the revolution may well be a caricature of Socialism with various degrees of resemblance to socialism.

The dichotomy in the nature of the Stalinist regime has been well described by Leonard Wolf<sup>13</sup>.

It is often said, not by reactionaries, Fascists, and barbarians, but by people whose whole lives have shown them to be good Socialists and good Europeans, that there is nothing to choose between the dictatorship of Stalin and that of Hitler and Mussolini, that in Russia as in Germany and Italy a ruthless autocracy has established itself, the dictatorship of a party, and that the group uses its power, without tolerance or humanity or justice, to suppress all opposition and so all political liberty and freedom of opinion and of speech. I believe this view to be wrong. The Soviet Government, whatever may be the results of its practice, is in its ultimate objective on the side of civilization, whereas the Fascists dictatorships are on the side of barbarism. This is not a theoretical, but a fundamental and important distinction. Fascism deliberately aims at creating a master-slave society, founded upon force and upon the social relation between the few who command and the many who blindly obey. That is the only social idea of those who control the German and Italian Governments, and their suppression of liberty and truth, their violence and intolerance, and savage inhumanity spring naturally from their ultimate aims. Being barbarians they follow out consistently the logic of their facts and their barbarism; that is part of their strength. But Stalin and the Soviet Government cannot escape from the consequences of their own ultimate beliefs. They are the heirs of Marx and Engels, and Marx and Engels were on the side of western civilization. The ultimate aim of the founders of modern socialism was not a society of masters and slaves, but of free men. Liberty and equality were their standards of social value; violence, repression, discipline, intolerance, inhumanity were not symptoms of communal strength, but of incomplete Communism and therefore of incomplete civilization. Their object was to sweep away 'the existence of class antagonism and of class generally'; they even looked forward to the withering

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<sup>13</sup> Leonard Wolf, "Barbarians at the Gate", Victor Gollancz, London, 1939, pp. 191-195

away of the State; for their ultimate objective was the exact opposite of the Fascist's it was the promotion, enrichment, and widening of the individual's existence, the creation of a community in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. That too is the ultimate objective of Stalin, of the Soviet Government, and of the Communist party. It puts them upon the side of civilization against the barbarians at the gate. It colours their practice as well as their theory...

Leonard Wolf goes on saying:

But though the ultimate objective of Communism and the Soviet Government is the antithesis of that of Fascism, namely western civilization, their attitude towards the communal control of power, democracy, and the social ideas and standards of western civilization has had disastrous effects upon the internal position and upon their achievements inside Russia. They are, as I have said, committing precisely the same mistake upside down as the democratic liberals of the nineteenth century. The liberals attempted to establish a civilized society of free men by a system of political democracy with a limited amount of liberty, knowledge, truth, equality, justice and tolerance while they allowed the economic system to enslave three-quarters of the population and set an inexorable limit to the distribution of liberty, knowledge, etc., and therefore to civilization itself, through the community. They tried to establish civilization while refusing to alter the economic system in the only way which would have made the extension of civilization possible. They pursued two incompatible ends and, therefore, disrupted the society from within. The Soviet Government is doing the same thing from the other end. It has established the only economic system compatible with western civilization in the industrialized societies of the twentieth century. As far as economics are concerned, it has laid foundations which would make possible the development of a real community of free men. But upon this magnificent foundation it has imposed a political system of dictatorship and a contempt for liberty, truth tolerance and humanity which are incompatible with civilization and which made completely impossible attainment of its ultimate objective, a society of free men. By doing this the regime continually weakens itself, for it is disrupting society from within.

In short, Stalin's rule had a dual aspect: a) on one hand, the will to travel towards a most humane society freed of exploitation, of prejudices and of racial or national oppression, and affording to all people the conditions for attaining the highest level of culture and for fully developing their individual potential b) on the other hand a paranoia mentality seeing enemies everywhere, intolerant of dissension, deleting all real aspects of democracy by imposing a dictatorial and terrorist regime.

The situation improved notably during Khrushchev's rule. The concentration camps were eliminated and dissent started to be tolerated. The regime, however, was still a monstrosity (in the biological sense), a distorted form of Socialism mixed with features alien to it. It is thus that, during Brezhnev's rule, characterized by a reluctance to advance consistently in the path of democratic reforms<sup>14</sup>, a particular regime evolved in the Soviet Union having many similarities to

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<sup>14</sup> While no attempt at democratic reform was made under Brezhnev, many economic reforms were introduced on an experimental

a Socialist regime:

- No private property of means of production
- Early introduction of an eight hour work day
- The right to work (and be given a job)
- The right to health care, education, shelter and vacation
- the right to child care and the widespread facilities for child care centres
- Easy access to and encouragement of culture
- reducing the economic disparities between the different republics and nationalities
- providing all nationalities with the means needed to achieve a high degree of cultural level (in terms of number of schools, universities, books printed in native language, theatres in native language, opera buildings, libraries, magazines and journal in native language, approaching equality for men and women in the educational and cultural field..
- an education geared against racial discrimination and for the equality between the nationalities, and underlining all humanistic values
- an education geared against war
- a policy against colonialism
- a foreign policy of help - without strings - to third-world countries
- a foreign policy geared to peace (more details later)

At the same time many essential aspects of Socialism were absent from the regime that developed in the Soviet Union. In addition aspects alien to Socialism developed without being checked:

- absence of democracy. Rule of a party on which the people had little control. The internal life of the party was also non-democratic. The 'cult of personality' was an insult to democracy. The impossibility (danger) of criticizing 'the genial Stalin' encouraged a passivity towards the authorities and their policies.
- the continuation of the capitalist alienation of the workers from the control of the means of production and from the fruits of their labour.
- the passivity of the party controlled unions
- Internal policies more directed at securing the people's passive acceptance of the regime, than at

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level. They failed due to the resistance of the economic establishment (the leaderships of the industrial concerns)

exploring ways of ensuring and developing its Socialist character.

- distortion of information and statistics. Misinformation in speeches and articles
- absence of governmental ecological concern
- economic privileges accorded to a restricted class, mainly party leaders, both local and national.
- the development of economic fiefs in which some individuals reached positions of power without being elected, and not necessarily reflecting ability and dedication
- slow disappearance of party credibility. Its obvious corruption seemed to encourage a general corruption of society (bribes, petty stealing etc..)
- slow disappearance of the pioneer spirit, of the sense of mission.

Under Brezhnev's rule, the regime seemed stable and secure. It could have even been popular had it found a solution to the economic stagnation. Though stagnation is better than recession, stagnation at a low level of satisfaction of consumer's needs can be strongly resented.

Though some segments of the population suffered from the absence of democracy, most of the population had no other concern than that of an improvement in living conditions. 'Turning the economy around' proved to be puzzlingly difficult.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS NATIONALITIES

The eagerness with which the different republics have declared their independence and have rejected proposals for any kind of union infringing on this independence, would suggest that the nationalities in the Soviet Union have been ill-treated. Strange as it may now seem, the fact is that the Soviet Union's policy towards its nationalities was, in the main, an example of conduct of a central power, far more generous, humane and civilized than anything the west can produce from its long record. This has been recognized by some of the best known western experts who, nevertheless, did predict the collapse of 'the Soviet empire'

In her book written in the seventies 'The Empire blows up' with the subtitle "The Nations' revolt in U.S.S.R."<sup>15</sup>, Helene Carrere d'Encausse<sup>16</sup> wrote:

Of course, the Soviet authorities constantly underline that the level of development of the republics has become close to a state of quasi-equality and that the standard of living of the peripheral populations is often superior to that of the population living in the center. The foreign observers who have visited Central Asia generally confirm this last point, insisting on the disparity between center and periphery to the benefit of the latter.<sup>17</sup>(p.118)

Speaking of the options open to nationalists, the author adds:

The non-Russians are too fond of the federal system that it be possible to submit it to a frontal attack...(p. 128)

For their part, the Armenians have demonstrated a great degree of loyalty towards the U.S.S.R...(p. 148)

No political system in the XXth century has more brooded over the languages spoken by the subjects than the Soviet system. The linguistic policy doubtless is the most

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<sup>15</sup> The title and subtitle are translations from French

<sup>16</sup> She is a French Sovietologist specializing on the question of Soviet Nationalities. Her strong anti-communism does not prevent her from objectively presenting the facts, the reliability of which she has ascertained by numerous visits to the different Soviet republics. Though the bursting of the Soviet Union into its national parts does not seem to be the necessary conclusion deriving from her observations, credit must be given to her for having understood that the Soviet successes in the national realm would remain fragile as long as national feelings remained so strong.

<sup>17</sup> In page 119, a table gives the family income and the individual income in the different republics. It shows that though some republics score better than average on the family income, they score less on the individual income (in view of the large family size). However, the author recognizes in pp. 120-121 that a number of factors, such as climate and local availability of fruits and vegetables, restore the balance in favour of Central Asia republics.

original aspect of the action set upon by the authorities in national matter. It is also, and that is certain, its biggest success.(p. 171)

And finally the following two quotations which seem at odd with the spectacle offered by the Soviet Union today:

The Soviet political scene is characterised first of all by national diversity and by the intensity of the national feelings. In this respect the national policy of the authorities constitutes a resounding success, and a no lesser resounding failure. Success because the regime has for a first period aimed at allowing and helping the blossoming of nationalities and even the smallest ethnic groups in order to exhaust their national wills in this bestowed freedom. This blossoming, everything testifies that it has been achieved. (p. 271)

The affirmation of the national wills takes in U.S.S.R. a particular character that it is important to underline. It is not a matter of ethnical oppositions being expressed without restraint and aimed at independence of the concerned groups. Nationalism develops in U.S.S.R. in a particular frame, that of the Soviet ideology and its institutions. That is why it would be futile to look there for movements of national independence. Presently, belonging to the Soviet society is a data which, implicitly, nobody questions. It is inside this society, in the very name of its ideals, that each nation tries to best organize itself and ensure its everlastingness.

The author underlines that the success of the Soviet national policy is also a sign of the failure of the Soviet international policy which, she alleges, requires the liquidation of the national feelings. In short, by succeeding in 'solving' the national problem to the satisfaction of the various nationalities, the Soviet Union has ensured the persistence of the national feeling which, ultimately, will lead to the bursting of the empire. Her predictions are stated notwithstanding her recognition of the great steps accomplished by the nationalities in all domains and, in particular, in the standard of life, health-care, culture, education and status of women.

There can be little doubt that Helene d'Encausse described truly and objectively the status of the national problem in the Soviet Union in the seventies. This begs the questions as to the reasons of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the centrifugal tendency prevailing in that country.

The failure was due to two main reasons:

- The extent of corruption discredited the national Communist Parties. The unifying power of internationalism and of the coordinated effort of all national Communist parties gradually disintegrated.
- Fitting with the attitude consisting of disregarding difficulties, to the point of denying their existence, the central authorities arrogantly affirmed that national characters had disappeared in the Soviet Union. Supposedly they had been replaced by Soviet characteristics. The society was now made of 'Soviet men'. This stand was not only at variance with reality but also at variance with itself. Indeed the stand was accompanied with statements raising 'Russia' to the level of 'Big

brother<sup>18</sup>. The special role given to the Russian people was not to the taste of the different nationalities, specially when it was perceived as having the potential to lead to the neglect of national languages in favour of the Russian language.

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<sup>18</sup> Big brother is here used with a paternalistic meaning. It is in no way related to the pervasiveness of governmental institutions.

## CHAPTER VII

### CRISIS INDICATORS

Just after World War II, and in spite of the extension of the destructions brought about by the Nazi invasion, in spite of the absence of foreign help (Marshall plan was rejected for its interference with the Socialist economy), in spite of the felt necessity to produce atomic weaponry as a protection against the American monopoly in that field, the Soviet Union achieved a remarkably fast economic recovery.

Stalinism was branded by Khrushchev for what it was: a ferocious dictatorship and a personality cult. Concentration camps were emptied and, not having any longer to so much fear an atomic attack, the Soviet Union launched the policy of co-existence. Khrushchev promised that, henceforward, Socialist legality would strictly be respected. It seemed that the door was open to start curing the Soviet society's ailments. It would suffice to eliminate all traces of the personality cult and to re-establish the sovereignty of the Communist party's regular congress as the real leadership of the party. The 'politburo' and secretariat would only be directing bodies representing and implementing the will of the Congress during the time separating the holding of two successive congresses.

As was to be expected, there was goodwill in some quarters and opposition in others. While the symptoms were clear, the real problem was that there was no true understanding of what was the nature of the ailments. In the quarters close to Khrushchev, the good-will quarters, the opinion prevailed that the regime, after being purged from Stalinism, was now healthy and could already be described as Socialist. It, supposedly, had been Socialist even under Stalin though with grave distortions. Now the regime could be proud of its achievements.

And indeed, had not the Soviet Union defeated the foreign intervention in 1918-1922. Had not the Soviet Union been the first, soon to be followed by other countries, to institute an 8 hours work-day? Did not the Soviet Union made appreciable economic progress at the very time at which the Capitalist world was sinking in the deep depression of the thirties? Had not the Soviet Union progressed by leaps and bounds in the building of an heavy industry? Did not that give to the Soviet Union the necessary means to defeat the Nazi hordes? Did not the Soviet recover fast from WW II's destructions? Was not the Soviet Union the first to put a satellite in space and an unmanned vehicle on the moon? Was not the Soviet Union the only country to have eliminated unemployment etc. etc.

Khrushchev was wrong. Socialism in the Soviet Union was still a monstrosity (in the biological sense). The damage done to the public attitude and to the paucity of public expectations and of public willingness to criticize, was great but was not understood as being an important matter. Believing the society to already be Socialist, prevented people from thinking about what a Socialist society should really be to fulfil the dream of ending the workers' alienations. Those who in the past had critical thoughts on this matter were dead, often in concentration camps.

Still, the potential existed for a bearable regime and, apparently for a steady economic progress.

Socialism 'à la Soviet' seemed to be destined to outlive capitalism.

Soon, however, it became apparent that the economy was plagued with serious difficulties. As time went by, and as the Soviet authorities attempted to diversify the economy so as to satisfy the growing consumer's needs, weaknesses in the planning system became more and more apparent. The production's rate of increase was dropping. The quality of consumer's goods was deplorable. Instances of inefficiencies were multiplying.

The drop in the production's rate of increase was due to many reasons:

- It became more and more difficult to increase production 'extensively'<sup>19</sup>.
- The intensive increase of production represented a new challenge in which the planners had little experience
- The natural resources had been used wastefully without restraint. In consequence, the additional raw materials needed for an increase of production, were becoming harder to exploit. Additional sources of raw material were found in Siberia. There, exploitation called for much larger initial investment. Moreover, transportation along thousands of kilometres imposed an additional cost and an additional strain on the railroad network.
- The number of products increased and it became difficult to centrally plan such a huge number of heavy industry products, to which were now added a still greater number of consumer goods
- The interference of 'industrial leaders' whose personal interests were threatened by changes in the modes and patterns of production

These problems were already discussed in Khrushchev time. Later, in Brezhnev time, measures were taken for regional experiments which would test their practicality and the measure in which they fulfil expectations.

These experiments ended in failure. It is a matter of research to determine the measure in which that failure was due to errors in the design or the principle underlining the experiments, or if they failed because of a lack of cooperation from people who were interested in the failure.

Khrushchev and Brezhnev were well aware of the resistance opposed by the leaders of industry. While the difficulties were apparent under Khrushchev, it was still hoped that a few correcting measures may do the trick and overcome the problem. However, during the later years of Brezhnev's rule, it had become clear that the economic difficulties were stubborn and non amenable to treatment available either to the regime or to the imagination of the leaders.

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<sup>19</sup> 'Extensive' increase can be summarised by 'more of the same'. To build new factories as replicas of the old. This requires an increase in the number of industrial workers. It constituted no problem, as long as there was a surplus of man-power in the country side. An 'intensive' increase of production would result, for instance, in the modernisation of industry and the improvement of work methods.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REAL PROBLEM: THE COMMUNIST PARTY

A duality of power has always existed in the Soviet Union at all levels of governmental authority as well as at the levels of production. In any Soviet, there would be a disciplined Party group whose influence would not only derive from its organizational advantage, but also from the esteem, trust and confidence the Party enjoyed among non-members.

To that must be added the effect of years of dissent suppression and of lack of encouragement of initiative. The people had become used to expect the solution to come from above and, more specifically, from the Party<sup>20</sup>.

In the case of local industrial production the effect of Party interference had not always been helpful. Directors of enterprises resented the interference from non-experts in the decisions they were taking relying on their detailed knowledge of the technical problems. It was argued that the direct Party control was justified in the early days of the regime when the political allegiance of technicians and engineers was doubtful. However, after the graduation of Soviet generations of technicians and engineers, such a Party authority over the local production was counter productive.

And indeed such was the case. Measures were taken to give more independence to the directors. However, whenever production decisions were of a political character, the local Party committees could still have their word.

A further analysis of the economic difficulties must take into account the fact that the Party did not play the role expected of it. Here are some examples whose value resides in the fact that they are not isolated cases.

- Jean Radvanyi writes: "Under different names, the central indicator of global value had been retained though it was strongly criticized since 1965. It incites the enterprises and the ministries to increase the gross value of their production (i.e. as much as possible to use expensive raw materials) so as to, ostentiously, better fulfil their plan, and benefit from increased stimulation funds... It incited to make heavier machines, thicker walls, and neglect the small products requiring a lot of work with little raw material (specially spare parts)."<sup>21</sup>
- "How can we demand from the workers the respect of the plan execution discipline, if the higher organizations do not transmit them in good time and correct them many times without concerting

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<sup>20</sup> At first it was a matter of personal safety. Later it became an established tradition.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Radvanyi, "Le geant aux paradoxes", Messidor/Editions sociales, Paris, 1982, p. 125. The author is credible because his penetrating critic of the Soviet economic system was written before the Gorbachev era and because it was written in the friendly spirit of a person who wished the success of a socialist experience.

with them?" asks V. Chtcherbitsky"<sup>22</sup> This is a blatant case of the worker's alienation from their production.

- Jean Radvanyi mentions two articles which appeared in the *Pravda* on the 14th and 15th of November 1979. "It was a reflection on the choice of economic cadres (*dirigeants* of industrial and agricultural enterprises, of regional administrations..) therefore on the *nomenklatura* mentioned many times, a list of aptitudes for responsibility functions controlled by the Party... the criteria for the choice of cadres are too blurred and are sometimes unrelated to the technical and political competence; there is not a great enough reserve of qualified cadres, so much so that those in place think themselves irreplaceable, including the least able of them; this opinion is reinforced by the fact that when they are criticized, even dismissed, they immediately find back a position with equivalent responsibility. In general, the Party organizations at the base are often not consulted while there is avoidance of too direct and too lively criticism \_which could hurt the authority of the *dirigeants*". Pressure is even made so that the criticism not be published.<sup>23</sup>" Let us underline again that Jean Radvanyi took the information from the *Pravda*. Such criticism, adds Radvanyi, are in line with those expressed at the highest level concerning the lack of conscience and responsibility, the inertia of some cadres, and even the bureaucracy, indifference and arrogance marking the activity of many responsible people. Brezhnev, at the 26th Party Congress, and while underlining the fact that a great number of cadres had a superior formation, indicated that: \_One cannot ignore the fact that a part of the specialists, having acceded to the Party apparatus from the production side of society, do not have enough political experience and sometimes introduce methods of economic administration in the organisms of the Party..<sup>24</sup>

- An enterprise makes a constructive proposition to its ministry which, having regard to its immediate interest, rejects it. *Pravda* (June 6th 1980) publish on this matter a letter expressing astonishment that the Party organisation had approved the rejection. Such an action from the local Party organization was taken in spite of its mission of "defending the interests of society with more resolution and without compromise.." Jean Radvanyi comments: "When, on a concrete question, a ministry places the interests of his branch's development before the long term interests of the Party, he is only reflecting the divisions and inequalities in the society... It indicates the still insufficient degree of the appropriation by the workers themselves of the means of production..<sup>25</sup>

- Let us finally mention an astounding example given by Jean Radvanyi and taken from an article in *Pravda* by V. Goncarov on October 27 1980: "V. Gontcharov attacks another more fundamental aspect: cross-transports. Since many years the following phenomena is observed between two big units of the steel ministry, the \_combinat' of Tcherepovets close to Leningrad and that of Jdanov on the Azov see. About 25 million tons of pig-iron and steel of different qualities take a ride every year through all European Russia between these two cities separated by 2000 kilometres. 400.000 wagons a year! (not counting those who transport the minerals, the coke

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid* p. 139

<sup>23</sup> *ibid* p.143

<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p.144

<sup>25</sup> *ibid* p.145

and other raw materials..). It is justified by technical necessities. The two '\_combinat' are complementary. But the author asks, could the situation not be remedied so as to make each combinat more independent? The specialists say that this is possible, but nobody wants it! That is because these transportations increase the costs, and therefore the value of the gross production; always this famous indicator '\_val'. Without these additional transport costs, the plan - as it is actually conceived - will not be fulfilled, and the ministry as well as the enterprises will lose a part of their premium and stimulation funds...<sup>26</sup>

The corroding effects of the '\_val' indicator are evident. What is more disturbing is the apparent eagerness of enterprise directors and ministries to keep the '\_val' standard and exploit it shamelessly, for personal and local interests. This is done in collusion with local party members, in the perfect knowledge that, in so doing, they are hurting the country's economy. The party, instead of remaining the whistle blower, the watchdog over the dedication and morality of responsible people, has become part of the corrupted establishment. What is also remarkable is the perennality of the corrupt '\_cadres' who, when thrown out from one enterprise, are picked up by another. One has the feeling that such cadres must have been given non-official good recommendations from the responsible people who were forced to dismiss them, to weaken the blow on '\_one of themselves'. Other equally corrupt directors were probably ready '\_to oblige'.

It seems that at the helm of the economy was an establishment of responsible people who divided that economy between themselves into fiefs. Each fief '\_owner' was interested in promoting and enforcing those measures which benefited his fief, regardless of the country's interest. This was a '\_lower' and legal level of corruption. A higher level of corruption characterised those responsible people who were not content to follow non ethical policies, but became involved in petty and grand theft, illegal speculation, and illegal transfers and theft of foreign currencies.

The relevant question is: where was the party and what was it doing?

## **DILUTION OF THE PARTY**

Brezhnev hinted at the political harm done to the party by members entering it '\_from the economic side'. This may explain how the party membership reached about 15 millions not counting those in the Communist youth. This represents more than 10% of the adult population.

This number may not strike many as being enormous and could be matched by non-communist parties in some other countries. In reality the size of this number is an indication of the degeneracy of the Party. What would we say, for instance, if we were told that ten percent of a country's population were priests? It is not possible to believe that 15 million people in the Soviet Union responded to an inner '\_missionary' call.

When party membership can be an advantage, other '\_inner calls' besides the idealistic one can motivate a candidate for Party membership. It can safely be said that the majority of the Party members had no sense of mission, of dedication to a human universal dream etc..

There are, though, enough indications that quite a number of members were sincere in their stated dedication to the Party. A few millions of really dedicated people (3 for instance instead of the 15)

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<sup>26</sup> ibid p. 232

could do miracles. The membership in Lenin's time was less than a million. However, during Stalin rule, those members who had independent critical judgment and were prepared to express a dissenting opinion were thrown out of the Party (purged), when they were not arrested. What remained were the well-intentioned member who \_saw no evil, heard no evil and told no evil'. Those members established traditions of unconditional approval of the leaders's policies. A renewal of the Party needed a large purge to rid it of its opportunistic elements. It also needed a renewal of the critical and independent judgment ability. The Party needed to find again the spirit it had before Stalin's rule.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GORBACHEV DILEMMA

Even before assuming the duties of General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Gorbachev must have known that the Soviet economy was 'stagnating' and needed some overhaul. He must have known that previous attempts at radical improvement of the economy had met with failure due to bureaucratic resistance from vested interests. He knew that these same vested interests prevented the conclusions, drawn from some very successful experiments, from being translated into vast scale reality.

He had a number of cards in his hands: his position as General Secretary of the Party, his good will and the support of some other party members. He knew he needed more than that. He needed a party of disciplined dedicated members who would tirelessly work towards gaining the popular support for his policies. However, more than anything else, he needed a party of members with highly developed critical minds, able and ready to discover and oppose any local efforts at using economic centers of powers to derail his reforms. The Soviet Communist Party was not such a party, and there was no other that could be formed speedily, would be Socialist in character and whose members would have the needed qualities: critical sense, courage of independent opinion, discipline in action. Of these three qualities the first two had been successfully eliminated by a few generations of bureaucratic and oppressive measures.

The situation inherited by Gorbachev was not desperate. The economy, though almost stagnating, was 'in working conditions'. The 'command economy', with all its shortcomings, was moving the main gears and the standard of living, while not improving markedly, was not decreasing.

Just by 'new thinking' in foreign policy, just by abandoning the effort at parity with the military level of rearmament by the U.S.A., Gorbachev could have liberated an amount of productive power that could have been felt at the consumer level. As a matter of fact the first two years of Gorbachev's rule witnessed a slight improvement of the economic situation in the country.

Gorbachev, however, knew that this was not the needed long term solution. Not having at his disposal a Party leadership fully supporting him in the implementation of radical changes, and having to deal with irreducible local centres of economic power, Gorbachev, in his endeavour for 'Perestroika', called for the direct support of the people. It was thus that he associated his program for Perestroika with the launching of the 'Glasnost' initiative.

The Party, however, was an essential part of the problem. It included a large number of opportunists who had no dedication to Socialism. Glasnost was supposed to be the means by which Gorbachev, with the people's help, would overcome the Party's resistance to Perestroika, would rejuvenate the Party, and start a successful campaign for Perestroika.

What occurred was not what Gorbachev expected. To appeal to the people against the party's reluctance for the needed reforms, weakened and discredited the Party. At the same time, the local centers of economic power, actively worked to paralyse the economy. The hope of the fief lords

was to discredit Gorbachev and have him replaced by a 'conservative' leader who would resort to cosmetic changes and would not be a threat to their privileges. The economic situation, therefore, worsened at a fast rate under the sabotage of the 'lords' of economic fiefs

With a discredited Party and a paralysed economy Gorbachev himself lost the support of the country. The gates were wide open to all demagogues and opportunists who held strong positions in the Party and outside. These demagogues and opportunists found it easy to gain popularity by appealing to the nationalist feelings in the different republics. The Party which was the main 'glue' holding together the different parts of the Soviet Union by their successful, disciplined and co-ordinated work, turned out to be a refuge for nationalists with no loyalty to Socialism who had become members driven by opportunism.

In retrospect it is possible to point out to other alternatives which had a much better chance of success than the way chosen by Gorbachev. An evaluation of these alternatives can only be speculative in nature. Could Gorbachev have launched 'Perestroika' without associating it with 'Glassnost'? Could Gorbachev, instead of aiming at the global reform of the country's economy, have restricted his effort to a relatively gradual system of reforms which may have met less resistance? Could he have launched a policy aimed at a slow improvement of the Party's membership and spirit? Could he have first reduced, and then in time reduced still more, the privileges of Party members? Could he have, gradually, recreated a correct Party spirit and increased Party democracy, before extending democracy to all the country? Then, may be, with a dynamic party engrossed with the understanding of its mission, he could have launched Perestroika without fear of the resistance of the fiefs' lords. May be.

We cannot be sure which alternative would have been more successful. From the point of view of a regenerated socialism, the Gorbachev option was a total failure. We cannot blame Gorbachev for the failure. He may have tempted to do the impossible. The main blame lay on Gorbachev's predecessors, and mainly on Stalin<sup>27</sup>.

The fact that Gorbachev had met with such resistance in implementing Perestroika prevented the world from witnessing the results Perestroika would have brought about, had it been given a fair chance. In the absence of such a demonstration, the question remains: what was wrong in the Soviet economy? Was it the central command control? Was it the inherent defect of the public ownership of the means of production? Was it the absence of a free market? Was it the lack of Democracy? Was it the fact that a Socialist economy can succeed only in an advanced industrial country?

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<sup>27</sup> Individuals do play an important role in history. However, the story of the Soviet Collapse is not wholly one of individuals. We already mentioned the fact that Tsarist Russia had no democratic traditions and weak industrial development. These two factors played a determining role in the corruption of Socialism in the Soviet Union. The intervention in 1918-1922, the economic blockade, World War II with the immense destruction it caused in the Soviet Union, the threat of the U.S. atomic bomb monopoly etc.. also played their role. There are many documents proving that the U.S. escalated the arms race, in a deliberate move to impose on the Soviet Union a plight which might break it down.

## CHAPTER X

### FREE MARKET

"Free-Market"<sup>28</sup> is today's catchword presented as the universal remedy to all economic ills. With a free-market, it is claimed, a 'natural' equilibrium is reached between supply and demand, the quality of products constantly improves, non-efficient modes of productions give place to modernized methods to keep up with competition. Presumably, everything automatically moves for the better.

Free-Market has his losers and winners. It is a jungle were, presumably, the fittest survives. The society as a whole is supposed to benefit from the elimination of the weak enterprises. The enterprises which remain are those with the highest efficiency and, therefore, bringing the best products to the market at the lowest price. Under the rule of the Free Market enterprises can succeed only if they are geared to satisfy the consumer.

That is an idyllic view of "Free-Market", its operation and its consequences. Reality reveals a different picture.

### FREE-MARKET AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

A government that, at the international level, does not believe in Free-Market, may impose protective measures - such as high custom rates - designed to secure a captive market for the country's local industries. These industries, though inefficient, are viable and contribute an important fraction to the gross national product. If the protective measures are removed, these local industries become unable to compete with imported products. They may not have the capital, or the experience for modernizing their industries. The result will be the death of the local industries and, in consequence, an increase in unemployment, a sharp reduction of the gross national product and a lowering of the standard of living.

It is clear that a protected inefficient industrial network is much better than the decaying industrial network which would result from free-competition. The lesson is that before encouraging free-competition, a high degree of industrial efficiency must **first** be achieved. The economic chaos reigning today in Poland is the result of the adoption of the free-market at a time at which the Polish industries were not competitive.

A consistent pursuit of free-market methods, preceding the modernization of the industry, can reduce an industrial country to a third world level.

### CAPITALIST FREE-MARKET AT THE DOMESTIC LEVEL

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<sup>28</sup> The term 'free-market' is here used to indicate the subjection of commodities' prices, and that of the enterprises profits, to the effects of supply and demand. I do not imply that the process is free of interference. In short, in using the term I do not imply that free-markets are really free.

Free-market is not equivalent to Capitalism. We will see that there could be a Socialist Free-Market. It does therefore make sense to specify the kind of Free-Market being considered.

In a Capitalist Society, let us say in the U.S., the Market is not entirely free. It is in general regulated to a measure which varies with time and with the vagaries of election results. On the one hand, there are laws restricting what one can do in the Free-Market. It is for instance forbidden to steal, which is an important restriction. Blatant cheating is forbidden when it is equivalent to stealing. You are not allowed to sell 300 grams of coffee under a label mentioning 400 grams. Blatant false claims are also forbidden. You cannot advertise your coffee product as an efficient protection against cancer, unless the claim is supported by medical evidence presented by medical authorities.

On the other hand, non-blatant false pretence is allowed. You may for instance say that your blend of coffee, more than that of the competitors, makes you feel relax and young. Success does not depend only on efficiency and on tailoring the product to the needs and taste of the customers. It may depend, in a great measure, on the ability to manipulate the consumers, so as to create in them '\_needs\_' and distil in them disinformation leading to a tailoring of the customers' perceived needs and taste to fit the product. In this scenario, it is not the more efficient production and the more useful which wins the day. The winner is the one who can outdo and outlive the competition in the exceedingly costly publicity war. Here also, survival is not, necessarily, a sign of superiority.

Besides, there is a constant state intervention which narrows the field of the Free-Market. The government, for instance, gives subsidies to the farmers to encourage them decrease their production. The government helps the big enterprises to rescue them from bankruptcy. Finally there is the sore example of the armament industries. They are totally dependent on the government's good-will. It was to be expected that in this particular situation of a single customer<sup>29</sup> (the government) and a multiplicity of suppliers, the government would have no difficulty in forcing the prices down according to the laws of the Free-Market. In fact, the armament industry is one of the most lucrative. It is almost devoid of risks - as long as the industry remains '\_honest\_' and thus avoids being sued. It provides a profit rate higher than 30%. Free-Market here is not very operative.

Other ills of the Capitalist Free-Market will only be mentioned, cyclic recessions, chronic unemployment, wide-spread misery and hunger, ferocious exploitation of the weak third world labour, wars of imperialist motivation to protect '\_Free-Markets\_', misery brought about by controlling the prices of raw material exported by the third world etc.. etc..

There is also little doubts that the Capitalist Free-Market economy does not give equal chances for the blooming of the individual potential to all people. The chances are strongly biased in favour of those born to rich and influential parents. Moreover the share of a person of the social wealth does not corresponds to his merits. Einstein's share of wealth, for instance, was infinitesimal compared to that of a Rockefeller or a Morgan.

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<sup>29</sup> The armament industries do export arms to foreign clients. However, on one hand the armament exports are much smaller in value than the domestic sales - to the U.S. government - and, on the other hand, the foreign sales are subject to the approval of the U.S. government a fact which gives to the government a lot of leverage.

## SOCIALIST FREE-MARKET

It has been said that the events in Eastern Europe have proven the failure of central-command economy as contrasted with Free-Market economy. This is far from true. The Soviet experience has proven to be a failure. However, this failure must be studied within the merits of the case. What is true in the Soviet experience does not have to be true in other cases.

The Socialist experiment in the Soviet Union was characterized by having occurred:

- in a weakly industrial country with no democratic traditions.
- in a situation where extensive industrialization was at the same time a) absolutely necessary for the protection of the country against the hostility of powerful industrial countries, and b) exceedingly harmful to the temporary well-being of the country and to the unity of its leadership.
- in conditions that favoured the institution of a pervasive and oppressive bureaucracy which alienated the population from its expected control over the production, its distribution, and over the state apparatus.

It is very doubtful that any other form than command economy could have succeeded in ensuring the fast industrialization of the country<sup>30</sup>. However, there is no evidence that a command economy is incompatible with a limitation of bureaucracy<sup>31</sup> brought about by a healthy public participation in the workings of the economy and of the state.

Similarly, there is no indication of the evolution a socialist revolution would have taken, had it occurred in France, Britain, the United States or Germany, all being countries heavily industrialized and with well established democratic traditions.

Socialist democracy is, of course, to be different from Capitalist democracy - what is called '\_western democracy' -. However, capitalist democracy may be a much better ground for the development of Socialist democracy than was the case with Tsarist Russia.

The viability of command-economy has been demonstrated by the Soviet Union. The concept of a Socialist Free-Market, however, received little consideration. The definition of Socialism makes no reference to the existence of a market - free or not. It only requires the social ownership of means of production and the control of all aspects of production and distribution by the working people, including the control of the state.

There would be a Socialist Free-Market if each enterprise would be '\_owned' by its workers. They

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<sup>30</sup> When Britain and the U.S. faced the terrible Nazi danger, they realized that the economy had to work at full steam. Their governments knew that operating under the laws of the free-market would not do. They therefore introduced stringent economic controls which brought the whole economy closer to the central command mode.

<sup>31</sup> Bureaucracy is another term to indicate the necessary administrative structure. In the measure in which this structure, be it called bureaucracy or otherwise, is devoid of self-centred aims and restricts itself to the role of 'action facilitator' it constitutes no danger. The term bureaucracy is here used in its pejorative meaning of administration subverted to look over the interests of its staff.

would choose the 'board of directors', they would decide the dividends to be distributed to the workers, and nothing would be changed in the ways the market establishes the demand and the supply and its prices equilibrium. It would be a situation in which the market would remain a price determining factor but in which the workers would have a complete control over the factories and enterprises. The law could be that no worker can take with him 'his share' of the ownership when he moves from one place of work to another. In such a case, he would lose his 'share' of the enterprise he was working in, and would acquire instead a share in his new place of work. In reality, there would be no ownership share. There would only be a share of control, wherever the individual works.

Details of the operation of a Socialist Free-Market system could be elaborated so as to correct it and improve it in the light of experience. Would there be bankruptcies? This is possible. Would there be unemployment? Possibly. However, there would not be the class conflict between Capitalists and workers and there would not be vested interests for a 'reserve' of unemployed workers to maintain low salaries and reduce the workers' militancy. What is certain is that, in a Socialist Free-Market, there would be no place for a labour market. The workers would have become the masters of the means of production.

The society would not, automatically, be free of some of the ills of Capitalism. Advertising would still be an essential necessity, for instance. How to prevent the advertising from being insidious, misinformative etc.. How to avoid the clashes between the workers' interests and the requirements for social welfare? For instance what would the workers' stand be, faced with a suggestion of a paid maternity leave of 24 months?

Here it must be noted that while a Capitalist may look at the suggestion as having only negative value, for reducing his profits through a reduction of efficiency, such would not be the case of workers controlling their enterprise. Most of them would benefit from the measure since it would give direct benefits to their family, the families of their children, relatives and friends. In the case of the Capitalist, his wife may not need such a benefit (she may not be working). Moreover, even if the benefit would extend to his wife, he would still be a loser since he would be giving the benefit to hundreds of workers in return for a single benefit to his wife.

The worker, having a small share in the income of the enterprise, would be in the position to effectively finance his own wife's leave and not more.

## **FREE-MARKET VERSUS COMMAND ECONOMY**

Nevertheless there are aspects of the Free-Market that makes it distasteful, even in the case of Socialism. Contrarily to what seems at first obvious, the Free-Market does not reflect the aggregate will of the Society. The reason is that there is a difference between the aggregate of un-concerted wills and that of concerted wills. In other words, in a Free-Market society, there is no mechanism which allows a person to consult all other persons before exerting its weight on the Free Market. The influence of a single person on the Free-Market is not only infinitesimal but is made in the complete ignorance of the influence which will be exerted by other individuals.

Let us take the example of the spending habits of a representative family. Let us also suppose that this family spends a fixed portion of its income on all sorts of entertainments which include books, theatre, operas, concerts, movies and television. In view of the fact that the cost of seeing television is very low, while that of theatre is much higher, the family goes to the theatre only six

times a year, while seeing television 5 hours a day. The quality of the entertainment is determined by its components, while the cost of the components is an important consideration in the user's choice. However, were the cost to the individuals of these components to be artificially modified - by decreasing the price of theatre while increasing the price of television -, the representative family would alter the way it spends on entertainment and may go to the theatre eight times a year while seeing television two hours a day. The final result could be that the family still spends now as much as before for entertainment. The loss of the theatre industry due to lower prices is exactly compensated by an increase of attendance, and by the savings constituted by the smaller number of hours of television broadcasting. Were television and theatre industries to be owned by one same enterprise, its total economic balance would not be disturbed. Let us suppose that, as the result of an artificial manipulation of prices, the representative family has changed its entertaining spending pattern, and prefers much more what it gets in entertainment quality under this new situation. It means that a result wished by most, and which does not affect the viability of the dual entertainment of theatre+television, cannot possibly be obtained by the fair interplay of the Free-Market forces.

The fact is that the concerted will of society has much more potential than the aggregate unconcerted wills of the citizen. It may be argued that this defect of the free-market is the price we must pay to prevent a situation in which the set of prices reflects neither the unconcerted nor the concerted aggregate wills of society but the will of self-interested bureaucrats.

The fact that a stern, insensitive and self centred bureaucracy was the end result of a command economy in the Soviet Union does not mean that any command economy must have this end. The absence of party democracy and of government democracy was the determining factor in the bureaucratic rule.

It will be the task of future Socialist leaders, in open public and party discussions, to investigate the measure in which command economy is desirable in a given industry and how many industries are to be so affected. It will be their role, together with the public to ensure that command economy is still controlled by the public.

It must be noted that it is easier to overcome the capitalist ills in a Socialist command economy than in a Socialist free-market economy. What matters is that while curing the society from the Capitalist ills the Socialist society should avoid introducing new ills of its own.

## CHAPTER XI

### DEMOCRACY

Lincoln's definition of Democracy has the merit of being succinct and precise. It is the government of the people, by the people, for the people. Since such a definition avoids the specifics of freedoms, elections and representation, it must be considered as a kind of '\_first principles' definition from which everything else flows.

As a '\_first principles' definition, it contains an amount of redundancy. The only '\_first principle' should be '\_for the people'. As to the two other components '\_of the people' and 'by the people', either they can be deduced from '\_for the people', in which case they are redundant, or they cannot be deduced from '\_for the people' in which case they are possibly harmful to the people and should be abandoned.

This point is very important because it underlines the matter deserving focus. Nothing is more important than what is '\_for the people'. '\_Of the people' and '\_by the people' are only the formal aspects of democracy which, without the '\_for the people' are no real democracy at all. If it can be proven that any given system, say '\_A', of government is more '\_for the people' than usual democracy, then that regime '\_A' is really the more democratic, whatever may be the other terms of reference, be they elections or the list of freedoms.

There is no reason why the regime which in terms of '\_for the people' is the more democratic, should be lacking in terms of freedoms and representativeness. However, the establishment, by insisting on given forms of democracy - forms which have developed to its current '\_perfection' under Capitalism - succeeds in hiding the fundamental lack of democracy revealed by focusing on '\_for the people'.

But why should not a government "of the people" and "by the people" act otherwise than "for the people"?

### FORMAL DEMOCRACY

Democracy has two aspects, form and substance. The form is of interest in the measure in which it helps realize the substance of democracy, and in the measure in which, without ensuring the substance, it ensures a minimum of tolerance for dissent.

In the '\_democratic' Capitalist countries, democracy is formal. It is defined in terms of free elections, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of the press, the multiplicity of parties and the equality of all citizen before the law.

What makes democracy under Capitalism only formal

- is that the majority of the population is heavily influenced by an ideology prejudicing them in favour of political and social myths which, in fact, perpetuates the interests of the rich minority.

- is that a price tag is attached to each one of the democratic freedoms.

These two points have been well described in the socialist, and even liberal, literature. Anatole France illustrates the myth of equality before the law by saying that a beggar and Rotschild are equally forbidden by law to sleep under a bridge. Similarly, the law equally allows Rockefeller and a factory worker to own a Newspaper business so as to better promote their opinions. They are equally allowed to influence the media by the threat of diverting the publicity they pay, to another TV station or another radio station or another newspaper. Similarly the factory worker and Rockefeller are equally allowed by law to rent a large hall and the necessary audio system for meetings, whereby they would express and promote their opinions.

The formal aspects of democracy to which we are accustomed, and which are always pointed at as prerequisite of democracy, are nothing more than those which have developed during the gradual domination of capitalism. Not having witnessed any other form of democracy, we tend to think that these forms are the unique formal expression of democracy and that they can even be identified with democracy itself.

Not necessarily so.

Apart from the obvious reforms which, in some way, would separate the enjoyments of rights from a price tag, apart from other reforms which would extend the formal rights by the addition of state obligations - for instance, the right to work would be supplemented by the state obligation to provide adequate work -, apart from all that, new untrodden paths could be explored in order to achieve a more meaningful and substantial democracy.

A government '\_of the people' and '\_by the people' could be expected to be '\_for the people'. And since, as for example in the case of health care, the U.S. government, for instance, is not acting in the interest of the people, this means that this government is neither of the people nor by the people. However, relying on a mistaken understanding of democracy, the government has only to point at the free election that brought it to power to say that, whether you believe or not that it acts '\_for the people', you cannot deny that it is '\_by the people and '\_of the people'. It is easier for the government to conceal its undemocratic nature by pointing to the formal aspects of democracy.

A striking worker, who endures the strength of the state and of its laws being used against him, has no difficulty in believing that the government is definitely '\_not for the people'. But he still may believe that, having been '\_freely' elected, the government is the child of a democratic process. It is '\_by the people' and '\_of the people'. He may think that these are the risks incurred under democracy rules. He is thus ignoring that the main characteristic of democracy is a government '\_for the people'.

In order that there be democracy, democracy in substance, there must also be a situation in which the people will elect only those candidates who are in reality '\_for the people'. The fact is that this situation does not exist in '\_western democracy', i.e. '\_western democracy' does not comply with the Lincoln definition. Free elections, a multi-party system, separation of legislative from executive power etc., at most constitute formal aspects of democracy. They may not even be necessary pre-conditions. There may exist a better formal democracy, one better designed to service the '\_for the people' aspect.

The fact is that true democracy has not yet been experienced in a situation devoid of exploitation and dependency. In Greece, where democracy was born, it coexisted with slavery. In the West, where democracy is claimed to reign, it, apparently, did not for a long time conflict with slavery, with being restricted to males and to property owners. It does not today conflict with salaried labour, a form of exploitation which, at places and at times, takes recurrently savage forms. In the Soviet Union, where it was hoped that a Lincoln kind of democracy could for the first time be established, the people were alienated from it by the perversity of an oppressive bureaucratic and authoritarian regime.

This means that real democracy has not yet been experienced in any country by any people for any significant amount of time. And since Western Democracy is certainly undemocratic, democracy remains a concept to be critically studied and even experimented with in various promising forms. This means that theoretical considerations have not been exhausted.

### **A POSSIBLE MODEL FOR SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY**

If there were an instrument truly capable of indicating the adequacy of laws to the interests of the majority of the population and the measure in which the system of government ensures the implementation of these laws, it would be easy to determine whether the system is democratic in substance.

As a result of media manipulation there exists a wide spread belief that Capitalism and its alleged free markets is in the best interest of the public and represents therefore an important element of the Lincoln "for the people" concept. As if this was not enough, the media misinformation often results in bringing to power the party which, among all those dedicated to Capitalism, is about the one most ready to disregard the interests of the people. Frustrated with such a government, the people may later elect another government somewhat better or somewhat worse, but it will not, in most cases, bring to power a government dedicated to the interests of the people.

It should be underlined that many such governments at the service of corporations are lead by individuals who honestly believe they are acting in the best interest of the people. These individuals have too much of an interest in the dominating capitalist ideology to be able to see through its myths.

A government of honest people is not a guarantee of democracy in substance. A government of experts is also not a guarantee for democracy in substance. Democracy in substance can only exist in a society whose dominant ideology is really at the service of the people or, in other words a Socialist ideology. In fact, this is the modern concept of primitive christianity<sup>32</sup>, but developed in an humanistic context and aware of the modern technology of organisation and production.

The reign (domination) of the Socialist ideology is not a matter of a successful political campaign. It is a matter of a slow purification from the poisonous capitalist ideology which has so well

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<sup>32</sup> It is often believed that Humanism and Christianity are opposed to one another. This is certainly not true. A true Christian is much closer to a humanist than to a 'fundamental' Christian.

brain-washed the population<sup>33</sup>. A true Socialist party can at best earn the trust of the people. This trust, in most cases, is not vested in the Socialist ideology but in the proven dedication of the Socialist party. At a time of crisis, when most parties have lost their credibility, it may occur that the people will be willing to try the socialist way.

## **MULTIPLICITY OF PARTIES**

Let me give an example of society \_for the people' democracy.

In that society, nobody can be a physician without proper medical education and without promising to be devoted to the health and well-being of the patients. Care should be taken that the physicians be not attracted by professional advantages such as high salaries, or any other privileges. A professional association will have the task to monitor the activities of all physicians to make sure that they are mainly motivated by the will to improve the health of the people they serve. Neglect of a physician's duty should be dealt by this association, which must have powers to discipline its members. The main object of the association is to make sure that the body of physicians is working in the best interest of the public. As to the interests of the physicians themselves, they may be looked after by a different organisation similar to that of a trade-union.

Would a person feel a call for serving the public in a medical capacity, he would have to abstain from satisfying that call till the day in which he would have completed medical studies and become a certified qualified physician. The health of a person is too precious, and measures ensuring it will be properly treated, are justified.

There may be a crazy theory suggesting that the people should determine who is to be a physician. According to this theory, the candidates for a physician's position would have to campaign so as to receive a majority of votes. The physicians could organize themselves into parties. We may then have an \_acupuncture party', a \_holistic party', and so on.. that is to say a multiplicity of medical parties. Whenever the acupuncture party is in medical power, all patients would be mostly treated by acupuncture. Later with a different medical party at the helm of the patients' care, a different method would dominate medical treatment. I reckon that no one is advocating such a \_democratic' solution. Once more, the health of the public is too precious to let it be dependent on elections.

The case of nurses, engineers and architects is similar. Too much is at stake of the public interests to allow them to be elected and allow anyone, even the least qualified, to be a candidate.

Up to this point, everyone will agree. But suddenly, when we reach the field of politics people are quite reluctant.

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<sup>33</sup> Salesmanship is an essential element of the Capitalist system. It has become an art and a technique extremely developed in the U.S. It makes use of psychological expert knowledge, polling visual and audio expertise by career people, it exploits the weakness of human nature and, finally, relies on an accumulated treasure of past experience in marketing. It is with these enormous advantages that the U.S. proceeded to 'sell' free-enterprise as the main element of capitalism. In comparison, and in this respect, the Soviet Union and its allies were childish, clumsy.. and boring. They did not learn how to advertise themselves and how to protect themselves from false advertising. They did not find ways to immunize the population against insinuating claims that, so often, are a cover to what they consider to be the basic immorality of capitalism. Not having been frank with their people, the Soviet leadership lost its credibility and became an easy victim to western brainwashing.

But think of it. A physician without proper qualification could harm a rather limited number of patients. A politician, on the other hand, could contribute to the unleashing of a war in which thousands or millions could die<sup>34</sup>.

Does it not come to reason that in the case of a politician, more so than in the case of a physician, a nurse or an engineer, we must make sure that a person has first to be a certified politician, knowledgeable in the field and devoted to the public interest? Should not the politician, still more than the physician, the nurse or the engineer be a graduate of devotion and of theory and practice at the service of public interest. Does it not come to reason that such a person should not become a politician merely through the device of being elected through the support he has from interested lobbies?

It could be suggested that

- a politician has to graduate from specialized schools (under socialism these would be socialist schools)
- a politician has, later, to belong to a professional organization the main task of which is to ensure that each politician is working for the public interest. This organization could be called '\_The Socialist Party'. Its members must be the equivalents in politics of what priests are in religion. It would be an organization whose members have to respond to a call for sacrificing themselves at the service of society.
- adventurers, power-seekers and the people attracted by privileges, in one word any person not motivated by the public's interest, should be discouraged from becoming a politician. This can be done by making that position one which would be sought only by a person with a spirit of abnegation and motivated by his love for the people. The people would be encouraged to keep an eye on the member's activities and to signal whatever in this member is indicative of a lack of fitness to his position.

In order to enter a medical school a candidate must already have educational qualifications of a non-medical nature. This can be established by relevant tests. Similarly, in order to enter a party school, and previously to that, in order to become a member of the party, a member must already have some non-political qualifications.

A person devoted to the good of the public must have demonstrated by his conduct that he was a good son, a good father, a good husband or wife, a good worker, a loyal friend and a good citizen. That's a lot of '\_being good' for which an appropriate test has to be devised. The non-party members, at the work place, can be asked to confirm or to veto the candidacy to party membership of any of their co-worker.

This can properly be called election and selection by the people. In time the accepted candidate would become a member, that is to say a qualified graduate politician, pre-elected to this capacity by the people, in conditions were the people was dealing with an open book, that is to say with personal close knowledge of the values, principles, motivations and past activities of the candidate. In addition, the party must itself be organized democratically. It may be a good idea to

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<sup>34</sup> Think of Dan Quayle as President of the U.S.

make the sessions of the highest party bodies public, i.e. open to whoever wants to witness the inner discussions.

A Party member is to have less free-time than most non-members. And, whatever would be his party rank, he will have more worries, more responsibilities and will be more accountable than a non-party individual, without enjoying any more privilege.

All aspects of formal democracy, including multiplicity of parties are precious in Capitalist countries. We know that for a long time medical doctors had to co-exist with what should properly be called '\_witch doctors', people who would treat patients with incantations and prayers. In these times such a co-existence was better than the interdiction to real physicians to practice their profession. In non-socialist countries socialist politicians have to co-exist with '\_witch-politicians'. It is still better than to have the socialist politicians prohibited from exerting the political profession.

In most countries the time came when the practice of witch-medicine was forbidden. In a Socialist country the time may come when '\_witch-politicians' will become discredited, without having to be forbidden by law to practice politics.

What I am trying to say is that in a country in which Socialism has been implemented in conformity with its democratic spirit, with an effective elimination of the worker's alienation from the means of production and from production distribution, with a similar elimination of the people's alienation from the state operation, the existence of a single party will naturally come about and will not indicate a lack of democracy. It will indicate the end of witch-politics.

### **CONTROL OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND SOCIALIST FREE-MARKET**

It is not difficult to devise means by which workers at the place of production would control its operation. The director could be elected and have his most important decisions subjected to direct or indirect approval by all the workers.

The real problem is that there may always be contradictions between the local interests of the economic unit of production and the general interest of society. A simple example would be that of pollution. Avoiding pollution is of general interest but is costly. At a local level, there may be a tendency to maintain the control of pollution at the minimum level compatible with the law. The local interest cannot altogether be ignored. However, it might be better for the general interest that a particular economic sector should do more than maintain the minimum anti-pollution level. If for instance an improvement in pollution control would involve a bearable cost, it could be justified.

Such problems are not simple. A local unit may be in competition with others in a socialist free-market and may lose a competitive edge were it to spend more in pollution control. Such a contradiction could be solved if the local unit of the Socialist party, the group which should be the most conscious of the general public interests, would initiate a meeting between representatives of all the competitive economic units in order to plan a common improvement of anti-pollution measures.

In short the blind pressure of non-concerted aggregate wills, must be supplemented by a modicum of concerting so that the general good of society be kept in focus.

It is not difficult to show that, if such concerting is done in every case where it could become beneficial to society, the socialist free-market would more and more resemble a command economy. Concerting within few economic units could be, for the general good, followed by concerting within a larger number of units in a given industry, to be followed by concerting between few industries, followed by concerting at the national level.

With every additional concerting there would result an additional advantage. The sum of all the corrections will, finally replace the blind nature of unconcerted aggregate wills by a complete accounting of the concerted will. It will be a command economy reflecting the concerted will of the society. It would be very different from the Soviet command economy which reflected the non-concerted will of bureaucracy and local economic fiefs.

The democratic nature of worker's control of means of production is to be realized through a command economy truly representing their concerted will, and not through the effects of a blind free-market - a socialist free-market is not less blind than a capitalist free-market.

### **CONTROL OF PRODUCTION DISTRIBUTION AND SOCIALIST FREE-MARKET**

We saw how the command economy makes it possible, when done democratically, to harmonize the interests of local economic interests with those of society. Remains now to see how to harmonize these same local interests with those of the workers considered as consumers.

In the Soviet Union, the consumers were neglected. This would not have been so, it may be argued, if production was subjected to free market operation. In the later case, the consumer would have a direct daily input, and the producers would have to respect that input.. or perish.

However, here also the un-concerted aggregate will of the consumers may be quite different from the concerted will. Let us consider, for instance, the field of publication. A publishing firm, even if controlled by its workers, is motivated by the maximisation of its profits. This, in turn, requires the biggest respect for the consumers will as expressed in the socialist free-market. Some books may be very important but non-profitable. The publishing houses may be very reluctant to publish them. Following the free-market expression of aggregate wills - which include the wills of children and teen-agers - the best policy would be to mostly publish mystery books and sex oriented books.

The fact is that most of the consumers, if polled individually, would agree that it would be a pity if some important books, in small demand, would not be published. Most of the consumers would not buy the books themselves but would insist that they be available for those who need to read them. Such a will cannot be possibly reflected in the free-market. A consumer abstaining from buying something in the free-market does not express his real opinion. If a consumer, for instance, refrains from buying a scientific book on cosmology, he is not saying that he would oppose its subsidised publication.

The fact is that such subventions are resorted to even under capitalism. University publishing presses have a budget allowing them to publish good books at a loss. This demonstrates the need for correcting the fact that the free-market does not express the concerted will of the consumers. However, under capitalism, those corrections are very limited in their effect and in their number. In Socialism such corrections would have to become more and more numerous and more and

more co-ordinated. So much so that it will have to result in a centrally commanded influence. This central-command has to be democratic to be effective and really at the service of the economy.

There could be for instance co-operatives of consumers at the factory level and at the city block level. At that level it would already be possible to have some concerting effect on the expression of the consumer's will. Those co-operatives could be democratically organized so as to form a national network. It would then be possible to know what the national-concerted will is. No doubt it would be very different from the aggregate national will as chaotically expressed by the aggregate of the non-concerted individual wills.

This national network of consumers could have a legal input in the central command economy. The form of this legal input could be the object of experimentation. It could for instance be that an important proportion of the responsible committee of central command be made of representatives of the national consumer organization.

Once more, the problem with central command is that in order to work as devised and expected, it has to be democratically operated.

### **MOTIVATION AND EFFICIENCY**

It had been discovered soon enough that the '\_val' as a measure of production leads to inefficiencies in production. Instead of improving and increasing production, fief lords of economic units found it much easier to increase the '\_val' of the production by making production as expensive as possible. A corrupted party did not perform its watch-dog duty and did not mobilize the workers against it.

The introduction of the '\_val' can be considered an experiment which failed totally. The real mistake was not so much experimenting with '\_val', it was the acceptance and the perpetuation of the '\_val' in spite of the known evidence condemning it.

The first lesson is that the party must not be a place where people can obtain privileges. It must not be a place such that an opportunist would find it advantageous to be there a member.

The second lesson is that the popular control over the economy must be enough tight so that there could not be '\_private fiefs' at the service of individual interests.

The third lesson is that there should be a tight people control over the economic experiments.

And finally, it is clear that even the '\_val' concept of production evaluation could have been a success instead of a failure, were the local party authorities to be faithful to their mandate and were the people at the enterprises to exert their full control. They would not have allowed an artificial increase of the cost of production just to increase the value of the '\_val'. The intention of the '\_val' criterium was to motivate a real increase in production. This could have been made by a better cost-accounting system to eliminate unnecessary expanses, to economize on raw-materials, to improve the tools, etc..

It may well be that, even without the sabotaging influence of private interests, the '\_val' was not the appropriate measure of production. This would have been discovered in an objective evaluation of the experiment. It would have been easy, in conditions of popular control and proper

party execution of its role, to devise a better motivating production measure, one for instance that takes in consideration some consumer input

### **THE PARTY THE STATE AND THE ECONOMY**

The Party has to be the watch-dog, the inspiration and the over-seer of democracy and of economic development. This particular role of the party has to be earned, and must not be given any legal status. It is the equivalent of a moral mandate that has to be constantly renewed. The party's authority must be deserved by its actual policies and actions and by the exemplary behaviour of its members.

It may be that the socialist society would be more democratic if any Party member had to be suspended from the party and denied participation in its internal deliberations, for as long as he is working in a position of power, be it political or economical.

The party's decisions are not to be 'Ukases' which have to be implemented. Those decisions must only have a moral authority. Their implementation, or rejection, is up to the people through their organs that would have been devised for popular participation and control in the state apparatus

Economic measures that look well on paper, may not operate as well in practice. Experimenting with economy is of vital importance for the building of a socialist society. It is the role of the party to encourage public control over the execution of an economic experiment. It is necessary to make sure that the experiment is given 'fair chances', and that the results will be judged on their merits and from the point of view of the general interest and not the interest of a particular group.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SOVIET COST TO HUMANITY VERSUS THE CAPITALIST COST

An ill-shaped human or animal is called a monster. In this medical sense, the Soviet regime was a monster Socialist regime. It was Socialist in some aspects but was alien to Socialism in some of its other aspects. It is the deformities which were the cause of its collapse, and which characterised a regime whose degree of oppression was greatest under Stalin and which, in spite of some reforms, remained undemocratic and, to a large degree, insensitive to the people's needs.

Nevertheless, the balance-sheet of the Soviet regime was not all negative and compares very favourably with the capitalist balance sheet.

### THE NEGATIVE \_COLUMN' IN THE SOVIET BALANCE-SHEET

- So much has been written about the numbers of people arrested, condemned to jail or executed that everyone \_knows<sup>35</sup> the number of victims is in the millions.
- The Party ideological stranglehold on science, art and literature was definitely a negative aspect of the Soviet regime.
- In the negative column must also be put the forceful imposition of the Communist regime on people of Eastern Europe. The forceful annexation of the Baltic states following the signature of a codicil to the Soviet-German non-aggression pact.
- The intervention in Afghanistan, while quite different in nature from the American intervention in Vietnam<sup>36</sup>, may be written in the negative column.

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<sup>35</sup> The number of victims of Stalin's terror has been the object of guessing by a number of authors. Robert Conquest writes in "the Great Terror", p. 754: "In a totalitarian country the question of evidence assumes a special form.. The truth can only percolate in the form of hearsay.. But of course not all hearsay is true. On political matters basically the best, though not infallible, source is rumour at a high political and police level." R. Conquest does not use enough caution in using numbers based on rumours. His conclusions have been challenged by serious researchers. The estimates varies between 50.000 and tens of millions. R. Conquest has been criticized for having 'counted' as victims, members of the communist party who had been thrown out of the party without being arrested. They were the 'victims' of systematic purges aimed at raising the membership ideological level and its dedication. Many of those purged members were later reintegrated into the party. There is, however, no doubt that the number of victims was great.

<sup>36</sup> Before the American intervention in Vietnam, an international conference was held in Geneva and resulted in an agreement putting an end to the Franco-Vietnamian war and specifying that a plebiscite should be held in South Vietnam within two years whereby the population will decide if it wants to be independent from the North or unify with the North under the rule of Ho-Chi-Min. The U.S. worked hard to prevent the implementation of the agreement because, as Eisenhower is on record for having said it, there were no doubts that the specified plebiscite would result in the people voting 80% at least in favour of Ho-Chi-Min. The Viet-Minh fight against the American intervention was a continuation of its fight against the French colonial rule. The American puppets in South Vietnam had no popular support.

In Afghanistan, the regime supported by the Soviet Union was opposed by the darkest force of fanatical religion. It had enough

- The repression of the revolts in Poland, Germany and Hungary and the military suppression of an unwanted Czechoslovakia government is definitively to be in the negative column.
- Still in the negative column is what constitutes for many the destruction of the Socialist glorious humanist dream. That Capitalists would do their utmost to prevent the realization of this dream can easily be understood. That once established with apparent signs of success the Bolshevik regime was the object of the onslaught of Capitalist efforts aiming at, as Churchill said, "destroying the baby in its crib", is also in the natural order of things. However, many did not foresee, that the regime, Socialist in some important respects, would rot from corruption, lose its credibility and collapse ignominiously. This makes the dream appear more 'utopic' and makes it more difficult to rally people around it. As a consequence the Socialist movement is now less daring, less hopeful and less dynamic.

### **THE POSITIVE COLUMN IN THE SOVIET BALANCE**

- The principled stand for peace in 1917. The Bolshevik had constantly opposed the first world war. The first act of the Soviet Government was to propose the holding of a peace conference on the basis of renunciation to war acquisitions and the respect of people's self-determination. To counter-act the possible propaganda advantages of the Soviet stand, Wilson, the president of the United States came out with his 14 'points'. Before that, Wilson who was cognizant of the secret treaties between the allies, did not express any opposition to them. It is the Bolshevik revolution which changed the situation and forced all the allies to talk publicly in terms of principles. The Western allies were not prepared to accept anything short of victory. The Soviet peace proposals were accepted by Germany only.

The Soviet principled attitude was underlined at the time by publishing the secret treaties between the allies concerning the distribution of the expected war spoils between them.

- The proclamation of the 8 hours work-day. This was a demand the working classes had struggled long years towards. Only after the Bolshevik Russia proclaimed it did the Western industrial countries follow suit. It did not come from the goodness of the Capitalist heart.
- The recognition of the independence of Finland, Poland, the Baltic States and Persia (Iran). The Western allies were reluctant to recognize the independence of Poland even after the fall of the Tsar in February 1917. While their real motivation was to ensure a common border between Germany and Russia they were publicly saying that Britain had no more right to say to Russia what to do with respect to Poland, than Russia had the right to say to Britain what to do with respect to Ireland. British's stand changed following the Bolshevik revolution. Only then did she remember that Poland had a right to independence.

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popularity to survive a number of years after the Soviet Union evacuation of its troops. The vitality of the regime is remarkable when it is taken into account that it has now no foreign military support while the 'guerilla' are supported by Pakistan and by the United States.

Another difference between the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the U.S. intervention in Vietnam is the fact that Vietnam was for the U.S. a far away country. The Soviet Union, on the contrary, is bordering Afghanistan. It can be understood that the Soviet Union felt threatened when the friendly monarchic regime was overthrown by a palace coup headed by the King's cousin Daoud who was collaborating with Iran, a U.S. satellite strongly armed by the U.S.

- The extraordinary economic successes. The Soviet Union developed its economy under the so much decried bureaucratic command economy, and in most adverse conditions. It had to spend enormous efforts to make up for the destructions caused by the foreign intervention in 1917-1922, to overcome the drain in qualified people who emigrated from Russia, to make up for the tremendous destruction caused by the nazi invasion, to consecrate an appreciable part of its production ability for military preparation imposed on her by the constant threat of foreign intervention<sup>37</sup>, all that in conditions of blockade, absence of proper credit and concerted efforts at depriving the country of any important technological advance.

India, during the same time, was going along a capitalist free-market economy and enjoying the availability of credits and technology. At first it 'progressed' under the 'benevolent' British colonial policy. It has been an independent country for more than forty years. The orthodox democratic capitalist system was unable to raise the economic production of the country as much as in the Soviet Union. Nobody speaks of the failure of the regime. The stores there are full of imported consumer goods that only a minority can afford to buy.

Latin America, the backyard of the United States, is most backward economically in spite of the rule of the capitalist system. Democracy is wanting there but that is o.k., it is the way Uncle Sam wants it to be. The only country which has progressed socially by leaps and bounds is Cuba under a strict command economy and in defiance of free-marketing.

The Soviet Union was first to build commercial jet airplanes, and first to put a satellite around the Earth, first to send a unmanned satellite to the moon. The western countries were commonly buying thousands of Russian industrial patents. The Soviet Union, before its collapse was the world greatest producer of machine-tools.

The cultural progress in the Soviet Union and the strength of the social conscience developed expectations well above those of the people in India, expectations increased by the constant flashing to their eyes, by the Western propaganda, of what they were missing.

To cure the economic ills and allow it to become efficient required a gigantic cleaning act which Gorbachev could not accomplish. The Soviet self-centred bureaucracy proved stronger. This only means that the potential was there for still more overwhelming economic progress. This would only have been possible if public control of production could have prevented the excesses of bureaucracy.

- The wide range of social benefits enjoyed by the Soviet people was far greater than anything available in the West. In particular the extent of the maternity leave with pay was eighteen month in the Soviet Union. It was planned to soon reach 36 months. University students were given a

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<sup>37</sup> Before World War II, Britain and France were encouraging Germany 'to go East' (C. Leibovitz, "The Chamberlain-Hitler deal", available through the author). After World War II, the U.S. establishment was advocating the theory of a winnable nuclear war which could destroy the Soviet Union why costing the U.S. no more than 30 million deaths. In particular "the committee against the present danger", organization who included as members Schucht, Reagan and Bush, was most categorical on the necessity not only to 'contain' communism but to eliminate it by force from the entire world including the Soviet Union. (See Robert Sheer, "With enough Shovels", Vintage books - Random House -, 1962, New York, for the literal text of interviews he conducted with these leaders and for other evidence)

salary while studying and not working.

- Though ignored by Stalin, the constitution he proclaimed, and its later modifications, were an inspiration for socialists and non-socialists alike.
- The economic help given to third world countries. The west, when helping third world countries, imposed conditions that made this help produce good returns to the helper. The Soviet Union was giving help without imposing strings or condition. In particular, it helped India to develop her steel industry. It helped Egypt build the great Assouan dam<sup>38</sup>. It is worthwhile to mention that Gamal Abd-El-Nasser, the then Egyptian leader, paid public tribute to the Soviet Union for having provided much help to his country without ever trying to impose any condition, without attaching any strings.
- The economic help given to Cuba.
- The economic help given to the Eastern European communist countries. This help took many forms, in particular, it provided these countries with fuel at well below international prices.
- The policy towards the nationalities. A concerted effort was made by the Soviet Union to develop the retarded nationalities. Under the Soviet rule they made great progress in all fields including economic, cultural, scientific and medical as well as the opportunities given to women. In terms of number of books in native language per 100.000 inhabitants, translations of master-pieces of literature, number of beds in hospitals, number of engineers, number of Universities, number of books in libraries and number of libraries, the nationalities are as well off, and often better, than the western countries. The same nationalities living outside the Soviet Union are, comparatively, fairing very badly. In the Soviet Union the education system was geared towards tolerance and love between people of different nationality, race or colour.
- The mere existence of the '\_communist threat' helped liquidate colonialism. England was quite determined to keep its empire. It was however felt that unless Britain and the United States would agree to give independence to their former colonies they would run the risk of witnessing an immense increase in strength of the local communist parties.
- The '\_indoctrination' of the Soviet people with the best humanist education. It included respect for all people and for their culture. It says something when the Soviet Union issues a stamp in honour of the Scottish poet Robert Burns. It says something when Shakespeare works are produced on stage in the native languages in all republics. This goes also for Bernard Shaw and a great number of European and American writers. It says something when we know that the Soviet Union is the country where people are more '\_addicted' to good literature than anywhere else.

### **THE NEGATIVE BALANCE IN THE CAPITALIST BALANCE-SHEET**

- The Capitalist spirit is ferocious and pitiless. Only when checked by what is humanistic in the

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<sup>38</sup> A number of articles were published to illustrate the harm done to the Egyptian economy by the Assouan dam. What is not mentioned is that, by maintaining open the dam's doors, it is possible to negate the effect of the dam's existence. However, that is not what Egypt is doing, and for a good reason: the balance of advantages brought by the dam to the Egyptian economy, is still much greater than the disadvantages, though the later cannot be denied.

Christian spirit, does it barely escape an open total moral condemnation. Capitalism had no qualms making children work in coal mines fourteen hours a day. It had no qualms legislating against the forming of trade-union and condemning to death those who would dare break that law. Capitalism had no qualms forbidding vagrancy defined as the state of a person who while having no real-estate property, is nonetheless jobless. Such a law put the worker at the mercy of its employer. Were he to reject the working conditions offered, he would become a vagrant subject to deportation to a far-away colony. Capitalism had no qualms having woman working 'top-less' in the unbearable high temperatures of the coal-mines. It could even find religious authorities to decree that, when a woman's bare breast is seen by man, no offence to God is imputed, provided it occurs in a coal mine.

Only slowly, as a result of long struggle on the part of the workers, did the remainder of the population come to be sensitized to the horrible labour conditions. The worker's struggle, together with the ensuing general outcry resulted in a slow improvement of working conditions and in the issuance of laws protecting women and children from abusive working conditions<sup>39</sup>. Improvements in working conditions are constantly subject to the assault of the capitalist class, often resulting in regression to worse conditions.

Later, the fear of communism played a role in the adoption, for instance, of the eight hour work-day, in order not to be unfavourably compared to the Soviet Union.

- Colonialism. Capitalism, for centuries maintained hundreds of millions of people under the rule of a few countries more developed militarily or in matters of trade or industry. A lot has been said about the "the white men's burden" and his missionary policy. The western leaders themselves did not believe in it and some of them are on record proudly expressing the fact that no other motivation than pure interest of the colonial power, motivated the colonial activity and propensity for expansion.
- Slavery. For many years it was a U.S. capitalist institution. The civil war occurred when, for economic reasons, the U.S. government decided that any state joining the union would be slave-free. The decision did not imply the suppression of slavery all over the U.S. The American constitution did not include a provision against slavery.
- Wars. Feudalism was supposed to be a mutually beneficial relation between the peasant and their lord. The peasants would pay rent, would be subjected to a limited number of statute working days for his lord without pay and, in return, the lord would protect them against the brigands. At the time, wars were not of great concern for the people. They were not directly involved in the battles between neighbouring lords. Later, when capitalism succeeded in abolishing more and more of the trade barriers, neighbouring populations speaking a common language united into nations. It is then that wars between rulers became wars between nations. They caused increased amounts of miseries and casualties. It is then that ordinary people started to become soldiers, i.e. canon-fodders. The first world war can squarely be put on the debit column of Capitalism. The involved countries prepared for it in advance, made secret treaties to distribute the spoils among themselves, with no concern for the peoples' wills. The armament industries

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<sup>39</sup> It is not too long ago that some store owners manifested their good heart to the point of allowing their employees to go twice a day to the washrooms, for five minutes, without deducting the time lost from their salaries. They added that the workers would surely appreciate the extent of their generosity.

were of course all for it.

Germany was developing a powerful fleet. There is no divine law stating that only Great Britain has the right to have a powerful fleet. However, Great Britain had a large colonial empire which was the envy of Germany. Germany came only belatedly as a great industrial power. The major powers that came before her had already colonised almost all that could be colonized in Africa, Asia, and America. The only way Germany could become a great colonial empire, the like of the French or British empire, was by taking away colonies from France or England. It is in this context that the building of a strong Navy by Germany was seen in England. Britain, France and Holland were the have-countries, Germany was a have-not. Seen from the point of view of the illegitimacy and immorality of colonial policies, the situation becomes similar to a quarrel between thieves. Tens of millions of life were sacrificed in the interests of those thieves.

- The military foreign intervention in the Soviet Union. It caused an untold amount of misery. It was motivated by the fear of a regime which could demonstrate that it was possible to run an economy without labour exploitation. The West encouraged Russian leaders known for their autocratic stands, their national and racial prejudices and the terrorist methods they were resorting to.

- The suppression of democratic regimes in Latin America. The United States militarily intervened in Latin America to suppress democratic governments and ensure that no one of these countries would succeed in freeing itself from the strangle hold the U.S. had over their economy. The suppression of the democratic regimes in Guatemala (Arbenz), and of Chile (Allende) is still in the memory of most of us. Similar intervention were made all over the world. A civil and patriotic regime was toppled in Iran to be replaced by that of the Shah. This was done against the will of the Iranian people and through the manipulations of the CIA. Eisenhower ordered the assassination of Lumumba in the Congo. The U.S. through its CIA plotted the toppling of Sokarno in Indonesia and gave to the plotters a list of people who should be killed the day of the coup. The list was long, and the plotters made it longer. It is estimated that over one million people were killed in a massacre aimed at discouraging any opposition to the coup, and at inflicting a death blow to the Indonesian Communist Party.

- Greece. As the end of World War II appeared imminent, Britain and the U.S. were worrying about the future of Europe and the kind of regime that the population would establish there. These worries in addition to those concerning the fate of Soviet occupied Europe. In particular, among the countries that would fall under British and U.S. occupation and control, France, Italy, Belgium and Greece were identified as countries where the population would support the establishment of a Communist lead government. In these countries it was the Communist who had lead the resistance to the Germans and had, in so doing, gained the sympathy, respect and trust of the population. Manipulating the situation in France, Italy and Belgium turned out to be relatively easy with the help of bribes to the parties who, otherwise, were ready to collaborate with the Communists. In some cases, special 'gangster organisations', with personel imported from the U.S. mafia, were used against peaceful demonstrations in France and Italy. The CIA planned the splitting of labour organization in Europe and the boycott of governments having a communist participation. It is thus that within a short period, and in a co-ordinated move, government fell in France Italy and Czechoslovakia. France, Italy and Belgium were made 'safe for democracy'. In Greece, the situation was different. The country had liberated itself. The guerilla were armed and united in a common front, a front in which the communists played a leading role.

Greece was made 'safe for democracy' as the result of a terrorizing military campaign in which the people who fought the German occupation became the suspects to be exterminated, while the traitors who collaborated with the Germans, were given the military equipment for that work. The instructions of Churchill to his general, before the start of the Greek civil war, was to treat Greece as an enemy country under military occupation, and not to be afraid to spill blood. At the time, the majority of the western journalists in Greece, be they American, British or French, reported the provocative stand of the British army, the readiness of Ellas (the Greek popular front) to collaborate for a peaceful solution, and the fact that the majority of the population was so much anti-British and pro-Ellas that the occupation of Athens by the British army became a door-to-door operation. As a result of the British (and latter the U.S.) action, Greece got 'rid' of the resistance fighters who liberated the country from Germany. The day was won by the collaborators with Germany who instituted a most oppressive and dictatorial regime.

- War criminals. At the end of World War II, the United States, in contempt of international agreements, developed special channels through which they could help many nazi war criminals escape the prosecution they deserved. The words 'cold war' were not yet in use, but the U.S. wanted to utilize the experience those criminal had in combatting communism. The 'butcher of Lyon' was one of the war criminals so protected. At the same time, groups of Soviet soldiers who had collaborated with the German and were afraid of the just retribution they would get at the hand of the Soviet authorities, organized themselves into armed bands to avoid arrest and to make a living by terrorizing the local populations. The precursors of the CIA, helped by German war criminals, contacted them and dropped by air military equipment to these criminal bands. The U.S., an ally of the Soviet Union, was arming criminal collaborators and helping their work of sabotage and terrorism against the Soviet Union.

- Vietnam. At the end of the war against Japan, Vietnam was in the hands of a liberation movement headed by Ho-Chi-Min, the leader of the Vietnam communist Party. France decided to reoccupy Vietnam and restore it to the colonial state. The capitalist world said nothing while France was doing its best to again enslave its pre-war colony. The courage and determination demonstrated by the Vietnam people in opposition to the French endeavour at recolonisation illustrated to all who had eyes to see, and a mind to think, that the French were acting against the will of the Vietnam population. In fact the Vietnam army inflicted a massive and humiliating defeat on the French army which was far better equipped but which lacked the support of the local population.

The U.S. decided to replace France as the country who would lead a war against the will of the Vietnam people. Eisenhower is on record saying he knew that 80% at least of the South-Vietnam population was with Ho-Chi-min. The wars in Vietnam lasted close to thirty years. Asked by a journalist if so many sacrifices were worth the fight for independence from France and the U.S., general Giap, the leader of the Vietnam army answered that the number of Vietnamese war victims was smaller than the number of people starved to death under French occupation for a comparable period. (France was exporting Indochina's rice regardless of the needs of the local population)

- Korea. Both regimes in South and North regime were wanting with respect to democracy. South Korea in this respect was even worse than the Communist North. While the people in North Korea were demonstrating its support for the regime, the people in South Korea were demonstrating its opposition to a regime that could only survive by oppressing the dissenters. Syngman Rhee was constantly repeating his threats to invade North Korea. In fact, at the start of the Korean war, the

journalist Gunther reported that the war started with an invasion of the North by the South. Be it as it may and let us accept the U.S. version stating that the war started with the invasion of the South by North Korea. The U.S. took the posture of the liberators of the Korean people. In so doing they inflicted extremely heavy losses on the civilian population. The U.S. decided that they would save the Korean people, even if it required the killing of all of them.

- The capitalist world is subject to cyclical economic crisis. The government in violation to the rules of free-market, has learned how to intervene in the economy to reduce the impact of recessions (depressions). However the government leverage in playing with the deficit and with the bank interest rate has its limitations. Recessions will continue to occur. As to chronic unemployment, it is considered a necessity by many leaders.

- The Gulf war. Just before the start of the '\_hot' military operations against Iraq, Saddam Hussein made it clear that he would accept a face saving solution. He would be satisfied with a vague promise to hold unspecified talks about the Palestinian problems, at an indeterminate time with no specification concerning the representatives of the Palestinian people at these talks. However, Bush expressed his strong disapproval of '\_linkage'. Saddam Hussein asked to be treated no better than Israel when that country refused to apply the U.N. decision. That also was unacceptable linkage for Bush.

In reality '\_linkage', under a different name, is the main pillar of justice. It is legally called '\_precedents'. The application of laws would be unjust if people were punished more than others. The rule of '\_precedents' ensures the equal application of the laws ton all people.

The U.S. stand resulted in more than 150,000 Iraqi deaths, apart from an enormous amount of destruction, the starvation of children and great harm to the Iraqi's population health, in addition to the destruction of the economic structure of the country. Bush hoped that the army would topple Saddam Husein and replace him by another military dictator. When, instead, the people took to the streets against Saddam, Bush ordered his army to stop advancing. Saddam Hussein was even allowed to use helicopters to save his rule. Bush does not like Saddam. But he like still less the democratic regime that could result from the people taking to the streets. Saddam had the full support of the U.S. government when he was gas-poisoning his own people. The Bush administration pressured the congress into avoiding taking measures against Saddam as an expression of opposition to the use of Poison-gas. The interest of U.S., said the Bush administration, was to support Saddam.

- Starved populations. At the time at which millions are suffering and dying from starvation, the U.S. has agricultural surplus, The government pays a premium to those cultivators who agree not to exploit part of their land. The U.S. controlled IMF pressures the third world countries into a '\_tightening the belt' policy, resulting in a greater proportion of the national product being sucked out of their economy.

- Consumerism. Fashion, taste, needs and values are manipulated by the advertising industry. It lead, for instance, to the increase in the number of women smokers (yes baby, you have come a long way!). Beer is associated with virility and sexiness. Sex and murder are a constant presence on television, movies and books.

The pursuit of profits results in advertisers exploiting, directly or '\_subliminally', the most egotistic and vile human tendencies. This has contributed to making the American society one of crime,

violence and insecurity. The creation of artificial needs has lead to a distortion of the spending habits of the citizen.

- In that very rich country, there are millions of poor people, illiterate people, homeless people, hungry children and drug addicts. Racism and prejudices (against women and minorities) etc.. are widespread (the Nazi David Duke obtained more than 50% of the vote of the white population of Louisiana)

### **THE POSITIVE BALANCE IN THE CAPITALIST BALANCE SHEET**

- A tremendous increase in production and a constant technological revolution in the means of production. The increase in standard of living was obtained against the Capitalists will, but it would not have been possible had not the production increased as it had.

### FUTURE COSTS

As a result of technological progress, the ability of industry to pollute the planet has increased tremendously. In consequence, Global ecological problems are becoming more and more pressing. The free-market practice propels the industries into beating the competition by a constant increase of the production's efficiency. This trend goes against the ecological needs of society. There is no industrial establishment which would be willing to put itself today in a disadvantageous position with respect to the competition, in order to preserve the interests of the population, say, one hundred years further along the road.

In this respect, there is a need of intervention in the free-market and a necessity to impose protective measures. Under public pressure, this is being done in the capitalist countries. However, powerful lobbies have a big influence on governmental decisions. Capitalist governments, naturally, tend to respond in a belatedly way to requirements pointed at by serious and knowledgeable scientists. It may well be that, with the continuation of such a trend, humanity could cross the line of no return, of the impossibility of reversing an ecological catastrophe. Moreover, the problem is global. The ecological problems cannot be solved locally. They require the cooperation of all countries.

The dangers of pollution created by the large industries, have underlined once more the necessity of the brotherhood of men. Pollution in one country affects the people in all countries. It affects both the workers and the capitalists. To this extent one can still expect some capitalist cooperation. However, it is Humanism, blood and flesh of the socialist movement, which can really protect the future generations, rather than worry for the profits of a minority of the present generation.

More than ever, there is now an urgency for socialism in our generation.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSIONS

The regime instituted by Stalin had a number of Socialist features. It, however, was beguiled with so grave distortions that no conclusions, validly derived about the Soviet regime, have a necessary validity for a future Socialist experience. In particular, whatever failed in the Soviet Union may not necessarily fail in other Socialist experience.

The Soviet experience has been a precious one. It forced in the West the adoption of the eight hours day-work. It helped generalize the 5 work days per week. It encouraged and made possible the political liberation of the European and American colonies. It raised the cultural and economic level of the Soviet Union to a degree far greater than is the case in the corresponding retarded countries within the Capitalist market system.

The grave distortions to Socialism introduced during Stalin's reign have to be studied in order to make sure they will be avoided in future Socialist experiments.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is due to a number of causes:

- The Bolshevik revolution, which was undoubtedly a Socialist revolution, occurred in an industrially retarded country with no established traditions of democracy.
- The Bolshevik revolutions had to concentrate most of its resources, its organizational efforts and its thoughts, to resisting and defeating the foreign military intervention which included armed forces from the strongest industrial countries of Europe, Asia and America. It had also to face an economic blockade which, practically, lasted till the start of World War II and was resumed in the form of a technological blockade.
- Stalin's dictatorial and oppressive rule resulted in a reverted Party purge. Instead of getting rid of the opportunists and the people lacking the courage to criticize or to take initiatives, the Party got rid of many of its best members. The remaining members either preferred to keep quiet until better days, or became yesyes men. The servility of the members towards authority was extended outside the party to all levels of life. It was facilitated by the absence of established democratic traditions.
- The command economy developed into a most bureaucratic economy with no popular input and control.
- When Khrushchev, and later Brezhnev, attempted to reform the economy, the bureaucratic departments resisted. They had developed into fiefs controlled by a *nomenklatura* which put their narrow interests above the interests of the people. They were members of the party, the kind of members which should never have been allowed in.
- The arrogant disregard of reality made the leaders ignore the sensitivity of the national populations. They were offered the unwelcome protection of the Russian '\_big brother'. They were

dismayed to hear that, according to the central authorities, they had all become '\_Soviet men' with no particular national features. That '\_Soviet man' sounded to them as '\_Russian man', and they did not like it. The ground became propitious to the rebirth of strong nationalist feelings.

- Gorbachev initiated the policies of Perestroika and Glassnost. Perestroika was perceived by the fiefs' lords as a lethal danger. They not only resisted the reforms, but, relying on the audacity given by Glassnost to all people, they became audacious themselves to the point of disregarding the still existing central command economy. They reduced or stopped their deliveries. They encouraged centrifugal tendencies in each republic and national region so that they could have a '\_national' pretext to disobey central orders. The economy stopped to work. It may well be that, before launching his reforms, Gorbachev should have tried to purge the party and the governmental apparatus from opportunists. There is no evidence that, had he tried to go this way, he would have been allowed to proceed.

- However distorted the means and ends turned to be, there is no denying that even Stalin, in its own distorted and monstrous way, was attempting to build a Socialist society. In so doing, and in spite of the distortions, he met with some success in the economic, political and social fields.

The study of the Soviet experience, with its failures, may help the Socialists realize some of the pitfalls that lay ahead of them. In particular they may better realize the following:

- Bureaucracy is a permanent danger. In its neutral meaning, it is necessary. When permanently and directly controlled by the people it may be useful. It should never be allowed to get out of hand.

- The Party, be it called by any name, has to play an essential role in the building of a Socialist society. It is of the utmost importance that its members be loyal and examples of dedication. Corruption within the Party should be treated severely. No privilege should be gained, or hoped for, by adhering to it.

- Production decisions, whether made centrally or not, should be the object of a decisive public control.

- Central control economy could either be a bureaucratic way to develop the economy, or, under proper people control, could be the way to coordinate the aggregate will of society. In this later case, the resulting economy could be more coherent, more useful and more humane than the Free-Market Socialist economy.

- As to democracy, see Chapter XI.