

# HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

## A SOCIALIST ANALYSIS OF THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

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## ***Preface***

Most people know that in past centuries the world was very different from what it is now – different methods of production and means of transport, different ideas and behaviour, different political systems, and different social classes – slave owners and slaves, feudal lords and serfs, and now employers and wage earners.

What is less well known is what caused these changes and how they were brought about. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to refute the explanations offered by writers who have attributed the changes to divine guidance, or to the independent development of ideas, or to the role played by “*Great Men*”, and to show what really happened.

The interest of the Socialist Party of Great Britain is not academic. We are not asking you acquire knowledge merely for its own sake. The Party’s aim is to hasten further social development; to bring about a change from the present, capitalist, social system to a world-wide socialist system of society through which alone the interest of the working class – and indeed of all humanity – can be served, and class society finally abolished.

An understanding of the way society has evolved up to the present is an indispensable tool for the task.

Executive Committee  
Socialist Party of Great Britain  
January 1975

## ***Introduction***

The purpose of this pamphlet is to show that the capitalist social system is a dynamic and not a static organisation, having developed out of previous social systems. The historical role of capitalism was progressive insofar that the means of production, hitherto small and fragmentary in character, were welded into the gigantic productive organisations which we know today. The social powers of production are not under the control of society and the relations of production do not serve the interests of the producers, the working class. The social classes have been reduced to two, a property-less working class forming the vast majority, and a property owning capitalist class, the minority. The relations of production are anti-social because the object behind production is not the satisfaction of social need but the amassing of profit and the accumulation of capital.

The two main Marxist theories, the theory of Social Development (Materialist Conception of History) and the Labour Theory of Value, are dependent on each other.

Marx realised that any examination of the way in which capitalism worked, particularly commodity production and wage labour, could only be made by finding out how capitalist production came to dominate society in the first place. How did the economic categories, wage labour, capital, exchange-value, rent, interest and profit, come to be taken for granted within the last few hundred years? Only an investigation into history could provide the answer. The economic forces which had operated in the past had led to social change, from tribal communism, slave society, through the various stages of feudalism, the outcome being the worldwide capitalist system as we know it today.

It is the object of the Socialist Party of Great Britain to hasten the introduction of Socialism, which will abolish private and state property and secure common ownership of the means of production and distribution. Wage labour will be abolished, together with all the other harmful social relations of capitalism. This is a task for a socialist working class to perform. The political struggle has to be fought, but fought on the sole issue of Socialism. This means that workers in the majority must be conscious in their revolutionary role, and fully aware of the implications of their actions. When they gain political power based on a socialist mandate they can establish Socialism.

The Marxian theory of history clearly demonstrates that given certain economic conditions men will shape and modify those conditions for their particular social purpose. This purpose has in the past been primarily concerned with the development of different property systems and the institutions of property. That this development as a whole was antagonistic to the needs of the subject class can be plainly seen, but it was nevertheless historically necessary in fashioning the means of production and distribution which exist today. The working class have yet to face up to the basic problems thrown up by capitalism. They suffer under exploitation but still suffer or acquiesce in the continuance of the system which only they can change. One thing is clear – the social system of capitalism cannot continue without the overall support of workers, given because the prevailing ideas held by them are the ideas of the ruling class. They accept the idea of private property. The wages system to them is the natural order of things, appearing to be the only way they can gain a livelihood. However, the social problems and inexorable pressures of capitalism are making more workers apprehensive about the kind of existence they can expect under capitalism and what the future holds for their children.

There is no scientific validity for the idea that social systems are unchangeable. The history of the ancient world and middle ages shows that past social systems, seemingly unassailable, were all subject to revolutionary change. Capitalism is no exception.

## **What is History?**

History is a record of man's activities after he learned to write. But these records are not always a true statement of the position at a given time. Writers recorded what interested them, often within a very limited circle. They tended to include facts in accordance with their outlook and to leave out facts that did not harmonise with their outlook. A recent example of this is the diverse and often contradictory histories (particularly by the participants) of the second world war. Thus a good deal that has passed as history contains some fantasy. E. H. Carr defined history as "the study of man and his environment, of the effects of man on his environment and of the environment on man". This is a fair definition if one remembers that man's environment is mainly social. We shall have more to say about this later.

There have been many attempts to explain or interpret history. For example the spiritual interpretation – that it is the result of divine intervention; the great man theory – that it is the result of the activities of prominent men like Alexander, Caesar, Augustus, Mohammed, Cromwell, Napoleon etc.; that it has been the result of an intellectual awakening – defined as an intellectual development; and also that it has been the result of the geographical environment – the sun spot theory; or the work of some great civilising race. One modern historian, A. L. Fisher, threw up the sponge and defined history as "a series of emergencies, the play of the contingent and unforeseen". With no plot, no rhyme and no pattern.

Marx set out to bring order into the interpretation of history by his Materialist Conception. To explain the basis of the struggles, the changes and the development in history, by examining the social circumstances of the different epochs and the previous background. Why, for example, the ancient Greek Athenian Empire developed and collapsed; why the Roman Empire arose, expanded widely and then declined; why feudalism arose out of this decline; and why capitalism grew out of feudalism.

A few years ago a writer in the *Guardian* (March 5<sup>th</sup> 1965) put forward a common misconception of Marx's view. He contended that Marx preached economic determinism by which, he alleged, Marx meant that all individuals act in accordance with their economic interests. A short acquaintance with Marx's writings would show how absurd it was to attribute such a superficial view to him. One has only to consider such examples of Buddhists burning themselves to death in Vietnam to further their views; victims of the Inquisition dying for their ideas, and soldiers giving up their lives on the battlefield in the name of a mistaken patriotism. Likewise it was not individual economic interests that inspired polar explorers to face the hazards of the Arctic and Antarctic, or Robert Owen to ruin himself financially by his utopian experiments. And in the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels pointed out that just as at an earlier period a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, "so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole".

## **The Theory of Marx**

In his early years Marx was for a time the editor of a German periodical *Rheinische Zeitung*. While editing that paper he frequently came up against problems he could not solve. Due to governmental censorship he was finally forced to resign from the paper, later he conducted a searching examination into economics and history, and the writing of people from Aristotle up to his own time. He spent a short time with Engels in Manchester going through the writings of the utopian socialists. Gradually he found order in the apparent chaos of history.

A clear expression of his outlook first appeared in "The German Ideology" in 1845; a criticism of some of the radical writers of his time. Then he put his ideas forward briefly in "The Poverty of Philosophy" in 1847, and in the "Communist Manifesto" in 1848. Finally in a complete summary, in the introduction to "The Critique of Political Economy" in 1859. The latter was the forerunner of his "Capital" which was an example of the application of his theory to the production and distribution of wealth under the present capitalist system. A further example of the application of his theory was his "18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" published in 1852.

The following were Marx's fundamental propositions:

1. That the economic foundations of a given society – that is the way in which wealth is produced and distributed – determines in general the outlook of that society regarding the conduct and relations of its members, but these conditions are themselves in the process of change and constitute the dynamic, the changing element in history.
2. That there has been a social evolution, with new societies, with a different economic basis, growing out of the old – due to certain element having developed in the old.
3. That history, since the development of private property, has been a record of class struggles; that all class struggles are political struggles as they ultimately lead to struggles for control of state power.
4. That history is the result of the action of conditions upon man and the action of man upon conditions.

From these propositions Marx defined four social systems as having been developed in the West. Primitive Communism – based on kinship, with property held in common. Classical society, as in ancient Greece and Rome – based on production by chattel slave labour. Feudal society, as in the Middle Ages, with a hierarchy of lordships, at the head of which was the emperor, king or prince. And finally, Capitalist society, as in modern times, based on production by wage workers who own in general only their power to work which they sell to the capitalist owners of the means of production. The latter carrying on production for the sole purpose of profit.

### Some Misconceptions

The Materialist Conception does not deny the influence of ideas on history. In fact there would be no revolutionary changes if ideas did not play a part. What it does is to trace the source of the ideas, but to deny the power of ideas alone. Socialist have drawn certain conclusions from past and present conditions and are trying to pass on these ideas with a view to bringing about a change in the economic base of society because we hold that present conditions are fettering the further development of mankind. Wars, crises, privilege, poverty and insecurity in the midst of potential that could provide plenty are examples of these fetters.

Past ideas can exist for a long time, particularly when circumstances make them a favourable excuse for the advantage of predatory groups or classes. The false idea that the workers must have an elite to rule them is beginning to decline, but the equally false idea that coloured populations are incapable of absorbing Western cultural and technological developments still persists in spite of evidence to the contrary. It has been the excuse for the ruthless exploitation of native peoples by Western Christianity. The result was described early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by William Howitt in his "Popular History of the Treatment of the Natives by the Europeans in all their Colonies" 1838.

"The barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race, throughout every region of the world, and upon every people they have been able to subdue, are not to be paralleled by those of any other race, however fierce, however untaught, and however reckless of mercy and of shame, in any age of the earth."

But those were the days of capitalist expansion when conditions developed ideas in harmony with the open and brutal suppression of native populations in the pursuit of profit, and even prominent religious leaders like Bishop Hopkins, in his "Bible View of Slavery", could piously write:

"The Almighty, foreseeing the total degradation of the Negro race, ordained them to servitude or slavery under the descendants of Shem or Japheth, doubtless because he judged it to be their fittest condition."

Thus, although these are general outlooks representing the ruling class at different times there have also been minorities who like Howitt expressed contrary ideas.

Man makes his own history but he does not make it in the particular way that each intends. As Burns put it "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang oft a-gley." Society is made up of individuals with conflicting ideas born out of their particular circumstances and associations. It is like soup made up of carrots, potatoes, and turnips with conflicting tastes. Each ingredient is represented in the soup, but the final taste is not like any of the individual elements, although they are all part of it.

The groups who took part so passionately and ferociously in the French Revolution were made up of people with different and clashing ideas. Each group pressed its particular remedies for the ills of the time – communistic, reformist, commercial, authoritarian and so forth. The outcome was quite different from what each of them had set out to accomplish, and the battle cry of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, turned out to be an illusion, except that it was the liberty of capitalists to exploit the workers and the liberty of the workers to starve if they failed to find a job. However the economic development of the time, in spite of men's individual wishes, ensured that the result was the clearing away of the barriers that Feudalism had put in the way of further development and expansion of French capitalism. Napoleon was the instrument finally brought into the mess to finish the task that economic development had set before French society. Thus the economic conditions ultimately determine and limit what can be accomplished as the early Russian Bolsheviks found out.

For instance, technical conditions do not themselves determine the nature of a social system. The cattle or horse-drawn plough, the cart and the spade have been the mainsprings of farming in ancient slave states, feudal states and early capitalist states. In fact the tractor has only come into use in the present century. The same technical conditions also work out differently in different regions – in a river valley, a fertile plain, a mountainous district, and a coastal region.

The fruitful Nile valley nurtured for centuries a social form that only changed very slowly, because it was largely immune from outside interference until the arrival of the Persians, Greeks and Romans. This was similarly true of India and China until the intrusion of the West. Russia, although partly affected by the West, was bogged down by an inhospitable climate. The coastal areas around the Mediterranean, on the other hand, underwent a more rapid development because of the constant interchange of trade and people, and, in some areas, the need to overcome the obstacles of a less fruitful soil; as in the instance of ancient Athens. Athens turned to the sea, developed its trading with other coastal areas and eventually built up a maritime empire.

In spite of their relative isolation and the stratification of their social systems, the purely technical developments in ancient Egypt, Babylon, India and China reached a high level, as their products have clearly shown. Examples of the craftsmanship of these areas, produced centuries ago, have rarely, if ever, been surpassed. Some of their monuments are still looked upon with wonder. The dams and canals of ancient Egypt and Babylon have been claimed to be as effective as similar modern works. In fact it has been claimed that modern dams allow a great deal of the fruitful soil to sink to the bottom of the dams instead of spreading it over the land as formerly.

Karl Kautsky, in his "Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History" gave some excellent illustrations of how geographical conditions can influence the course of development.

First he takes a peasantry living on the banks of a tropical or sub-tropical river, which periodically floods its banks, bringing either decay or fruitfulness to the soil. Water dams etc., will be required to keep water back in one place and guide it in another. The single village can't carry out this work so a number must co-operate to supply labourers and appoint common officials. The bigger the job the more villages must take part, the greater the number of forced labourers, and the greater the special knowledge required of the leading officials. There grows an official or priest class. This appears to have been what Babylon and Egypt.

Then he takes the peasantry which had settled on the sea coast, with good harbours which favour sea voyages and bring them closer to other coasts and people. By the side of agriculture fishery arises, sea piracy and sea commerce. At suitable harbours plunder and merchant goods are gathered and a town with rich merchants is formed. There arises money receipts, money obligations and debts. Soon the peasant becomes the debtor of the town proprietor. Slaves are also brought in and peasants driven off holdings to unite in large plantations worked by slaves, and slave work is introduced for peasant debtors. This could be a picture of the early development of Greece and Rome.

The third illustration he mentions concerns a flourishing peasant economy settled in fruitful accessible lands in the neighbourhood of robbers, or wandering tribes. The necessity of guarding the land means the formation of guards who receive service in return, or robbers are induced by tribute to protect them, or finally robbers conquer the land and remain lords over the peasantry. Thus there would arise a feudal nobility which ruled and exploited the peasantry.

From the above three instances it will be seen that whilst economic factors formed the roots the kind of flowers that developed were influenced by other factors. Consequently, it is not sufficient just to make sweeping generalisations without taking into account all the circumstances that are involved – geographical, technical, social and inherited.

In order to understand the achievements, the internal struggles, and the prevailing outlook on different matters in a given society, it is necessary to examine, and take into account, all the conditions which together determine the particular form and outlook of that society. (Why, for instance, an outstanding thinker of antiquity, Aristotle, was convinced that some people were born to rule and others to subjection and, therefore, that chattel slavery would always persist). But it will always be found that the final determinant of its form and outlook must be looked for in the economic basis of that society – the way people are associated together to produce and distribute their means of living. This is the theory of the materialist conception of history.

The materialist conception of history does not judge. It has no moral viewpoint. It simply points out that particular conditions determine the way social conditions arise, grow, and decay.

Likewise it is not a mechanical theory. Man's outlook is not just a reflection of economic conditions. Social development is the result of man's action on circumstances. Economic conditions develop certain ideas in the mind of men which move them to alter their conditions – and so the process goes on. As we have already mentioned man makes his own history but only out of the conditions that are to his hand. It is reciprocal – man and conditions acting upon each other.

The real world is not merely reflected in the brain. Man changes his world. The brain is not just a passive mirror, it is an active agent in the changes. A wall is reflected in man's brain as a barrier to his progress; he smashes the wall down to pass through it. The idealist says the outside world is not real as man sees it, but it is just a reflection in man's thought. Man sees a wall, destroys the alleged reflection – proving that the wall was real.

## Thinking and the formation of ideas

To understand the gropings of philosophers and the origin of supernatural ideas it is necessary to understand how ideas originate and develop.

Thinking is a function of the brain, just as digestion is a function of the stomach, walking a function of the feet, seeing a function of the eyes and grasping a function of the hands. In order to digest, we must partake of some food, to walk we must have something to walk upon, to see we must have something to see, and to grasp we must have something to grasp. Likewise in order to think we must have something to think about. Reasoning is separating the general from the particular – horses in general from a particular kind of horse. We are all born with the faculty of thinking, just as we are all born with the faculty of seeing and moving our limbs, providing we are not suffering from some physical defect. Some can move more quickly than others, and some can think more quickly than others, but we can all move and think.

In order to think we must have something to think about, and this thought material comes from the world around us; from what we experience, see, hear, are taught, and read about. Thus we are not born with ideas. Our ideas are developed out of our contact with the world, no matter what form our ideas may take. Our world is a social world and as this world has changed across the centuries, so our ideas have changed in harmony with these changes. Our principal contact with the world concerns the production and the reproduction of life and its needs. Hence the formation of ideas can only be explained in terms of practice, and the principal part of that practice consists in getting a living. Whether we are rich or poor, which we do in association with our fellows, either by working or by exploiting those who work. Even the wildest ideas are built up out of the world around us, only parts are sometimes stuck together in an incongruous manner – like mentally sticking a fish's tail to a woman's body in order to make a mermaid.

**Mind, or the collection of thoughts, is a social product. Without society there is no mind. There is no such thing as a physical, a biological, or a non-social mind. The ideas, or the thoughts, of any given epoch are determined in general by the social conditions of that epoch, which also**

**includes relics of past ideas. As these conditions change so do the ideas, over a longer or shorter time. That is why moral outlooks have undergone such fundamental changes over the centuries.**

The forces of nature are facts. To attribute their action to the operation of a superior power, as religious people do, is a figment of the imagination which is already disappearing as scientific investigation is disclosing the source of their action and enabling us better to adjust our ways of living to the forces of nature, and to harness them to meet our requirements.

In the course of time man's increasing understanding has overcome some of the obstacles that hindered and frightened him in the past. It is true that earthquakes, floods and hurricanes still spread devastation. Their origin is now known but man has still not succeeded in protecting himself against them but, with the progress of knowledge this is only a matter of time. Similarly with disease. Though great progress has been made towards the understanding and prevention or cure of diseases, man has not yet succeeded in tracing the source of all of them. Many diseases are the product of social conditions and will disappear when the social conditions that cause them will have disappeared.

Thus there is much that is not yet known. There will always be something that is unknown because society and awareness of the physical world both continue to develop. To attribute mystery to what is at present not known, or to assume that there is other than a material and reasonable explanation, which will be forthcoming in the course of time, is contrary to the history of the basis and development of ideas. It is in fact starting off on the wrong foot.

Things that were formerly regarded as unknowable have gradually been brought into the realm of the known. A recent example is the perfection of means of sending rockets, manned or unmanned, into space and of landing men on the moon, thus extending man's knowledge, and opening up still wider possibilities of space exploration.

To primitive man everything possessed life like himself and, consequently, he was haunted by phantoms of his own imagination. As he progressed in understanding and adapted himself more and more to the conditions of life so the phantoms began to recede. But still the insecurity of life, due to the present social system and a lack of social conditions, leaves room for the mysteries and phantoms that still persist. Once a social system is established, the workings of which are clear and understandable to its participants, the mysteries will vanish – but knowledge will continue to grow.

It must always be remembered that society is not static. It has been constantly changing since man left the kingdom of the apes and built an artificial environment, which acts as a barrier against the natural one. Hence the influence that man's discoveries, tools and the social arrangements in accordance with them, have had upon the development of his ideas.

## ***Why was it called the Materialist Conception.***

Because it attributes to material conditions the cause of social change – in opposition to previous idealist conceptions, particularly the idealism of Hegel, the German philosopher, which attracted Marx at one time, but whom he later claimed was standing on his head and had to be put right side up. Hegel claimed that the world was the working out of the idea. In other words that the idea came first and the real world was a reflection of the idea. Marx reversed this, pointing out that that the world was real and the idea was only a reflection of it in the head of man. Ideas do not float in the air or arise haphazardly in the brain of man. They arise out of definite material or economic circumstances.

Thus the roots of social change are to be found in the means and methods by which society gets its livelihood – by the production and distribution of the means to sustain life. Consequently the basis of all human life is the production and reproduction and reproduction of life and its needs. This is the overpowering influence in producing social ideas and changes in the prevailing ideas in the course of time.

In early communistic societies, and still where remnants of them still exist as in the Northern Territory of Australia, it was right to take what one needed of the communal food, use the communal tools, and have considerable freedom in sex relations in comparison with today. These societies were based on the family tie and not on property rights. Today if you walked into a shop and took a loaf because you were hungry you would find yourself in trouble, because with the development of property society the moral code changed. The moral rules became “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours wife, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his”. As class society developed a state grew up to enforce these rules.

Among certain hunting peoples in the past infanticide was practised – it was accepted as morally right because it was necessary to keep down numbers owing to the uncertainties of hunting. The baby girls suffered most because the baby boys would grow into hunters and providers of food. This practice declined with the growth of settled agricultural communities because then the food supplies became more secure.

In ancient Egypt and Babylon a debtor sold himself into slavery to settle his debts, or he might sell his wife or children. It was considered morally right.

In the most advanced states of classical antiquity slavery was supported by moralists and philosophers. The economies of Greece and Rome were largely built on the work of chattel slaves. Similarly it was accepted throughout America two hundred years ago. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States are a sample of how sentiments can be at variance with acts when conditions rule acts.

The Declaration of Independence of 1776 laid down the following principles:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

When the Constitution of the United States was agreed to in 1787-9, section 9 contained the following:

The migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress. ...but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person.”

All men are equal – except those that are not. Section 9 was put in the economic interests of the southern slave states. At the same time the mass of the white population, the poorer section, was excluded from voting or framing the laws and regulations.

Amongst the Spartans of ancient Greece lying, cheating, and murder were virtues taught to the young Spartans. They were a relatively small group governing a large population of helots and slaves, whom it was essential that they keep in subjection.

In the early Middle Ages the lending of money at interest was looked upon as immoral because it cut across the close feudal self-supporting communities. Nowadays the lending of money is extolled because capitalism lays down the rules and the lending of money – or investment – is necessary capitalism.

In the Middle Ages generally women were in a subordinate position – little above that of a domestic slave. This was reflected in the views of some church dignitaries. Here is a selection:

St. Augustine “Why was woman created at all.”

Tertullian: “Woman, thou art the devils gate, the betrayer of the tree, the first deserter of divine law. Marriage is not far from fornication.”

St. Ambrose: “She is more fitted for bodily work ... Remember that God took a rib out of Adam’s body, not a part of his soul to make her. She was not made in the image of God like man.”

St. Jerome: “Woman is the root of all evil.”

St. Gregory: “It was no part of God’s primitive design that the race should be continued by sexual union. Marriage is the outcome of sin.”

It would be interesting to know how these saints proposed that the human race should be propagated. Presumably by miracles, like taking bones from men’s ribs!

Much has been written from a moral standpoint about the destruction of the buffalo in America and its effect upon the Indian population. The action of the hide hunters and the suppliers of meat to the railway builders removed the main source of Indian subsistence, and, along with the activities of the fur hunters, was responsible for the bitterness and uprisings of the Indians. Without the slaughter of the buffalo to provide food for the railway builders, the railway link between East and West could not have been built at the time, and the economic surge forward as a result of it, would have been considerably delayed.

The Indian war dances of the latter part of the nineteenth century were appeals to the “Great Spirit” to drive the white man out, bring back the buffalo and the fishing territories to the Indians and, therefore the life they had enjoyed before the white man hemmed them in and destroyed it.

This is just another instance of the misery and turmoil capitalist economic development has brought to humanity in its pursuit of profit.

To sum up briefly. Behind all the ideals of the past and present since the beginning of written history are real men and women in the throes of the class struggle. Human beings are the prisoners of the ideals of their times; they read into moral principles the ruling economic ideas and needs of their time. But fortunately they can break out of prison.

## ***The Working Out of the Materialist Conception of History.***

Let us have a brief look at the working out of the Materialist conception of history, in a general way.

Trading has been one of the principle means of welding the world into one vast whole bringing people of all parts of the world into close contact with each other. The impetus has not been a benevolent desire to enable all to enjoy the full fruits of the earth. At the root of trading was the pursuit of economic interest – the wealth to be acquired from successful trading, but reserved for the sole benefit of the trader.

The Phoenicians were the greatest traders and mariners of antiquity. In their frail boats they searched the Mediterranean for the little fish that yielded one drop of the precious Tyrian dye, purple dye; then they went further afield in the search for copper and tin for the making of bronze, their travels taking them to the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. Finally, in the pursuit of amber, they sailed to the coast of the Baltic. All of which served to expand the influence of trading.

In the fifteenth century, when the Arabs had blocked the caravan routes to the East, the traders and merchants sought an alternative route westward to the spice lands. The upshot of this was the voyages of discovery. The voyages of Columbus and others, at the end of the fifteenth and during the sixteenth centuries, to the new world of America and further afield, opened up vast markets for trade, reduced the commercial power of Venice and brought the traders of Spain, Portugal and England into the main current of trade and the forefront of trading powers, at the same time dealing a crushing blow to feudal economy. Out of these discoveries and rivalries to exploit the earth and the people thereon by the growing capitalist powers sprang wars with Spain, Portugal, Holland and the American, English and French revolutions that finally brought the rising capitalist class to political power.

Writing of the position in Greece in the sixth century B. C. Calhoun, in his "Business Life of Ancient Athens" has this to say:

"Thus the end of the sixth century saw the agricultural activities of Attica, which had once been the economic dependence of the middle classes, completely in the hands of a wealthy minority. Manufacture and trade had attained considerable importance, but apparently were, for the most part, carried on by aliens who came from other states, attracted by the mineral wealth of Attica and her advantageous location for trade. From this time on for nearly a century the history of Attica is the history of a three-cornered struggle between the landed aristocracy, the poor and oppressed labouring population of native birth, and a prosperous industrial element, mainly alien, who were still debarred from the participation in government to which their economic status would seem to entitle them."

The introduction of coined money was one of the principal causes of the ruin of the small farmer in early Greece. Before the introduction he could borrow supplies of corn from the large landowner in hard times and repay *in kind* when the harvest was reaped. After the introduction he borrowed *money* at a high rate in lean times, and was compelled to sell his products at low prices when corn was cheap, in order to re-pay his loan in *money*. The result was that when he was unable to repay the loan, his land, which he had pledged, came into the possession of the wealthy land-owner and he became a tenant. Thus a landed aristocracy was gradually built up.

One unusual method of acquiring economic standing was adopted during the later Roman republic by Crassus, a name that became a byword for enormous wealth. Crassus, one of the First Roman Triumvirate, along with Caesar and Pompey, had a band of five hundred trained slaves. When he heard of a place where there was a fire he hurried along to it and offered to buy the property or the one next to it. The owners were glad to sell for a trifle. As soon as the arrangement was completed his private firemen rushed in and put out the blaze. By this means the greater part of property in Rome eventually fell into his hands.

In the class struggle in Rome, Caesar took the side of the group which at any moment seemed to favour his pursuit of power. Amongst others he was supported by Brutus, an under the counter money lender (and "an honourable man" who only charged 48 per cent for his money lending) and Cassius who amassed riches as a tax farmer. Brutus and Cassius between them brought a number of Roman

municipalities to ruin by their extortion. When Caesar acquired power he cheated Brutus and Cassius by placing a limit on the extortions of money lenders and tax farmers and thereby signed his own death warrant.

The foreign wars of the old Roman republic ruined large sections of the peasants and concentrated landed property in the hands of a small section which formed the aristocracy, or patrician class; fostered the growth of a class living partly on commerce and partly on usury which fought for political representation; developed military forces giving allegiance to leaders; and further increased the impoverishment of the poor by bringing in masses of chattel slaves to work the huge estates. The conflicting interests of classes threw up names like the Gracchi, Cataline, Pompey and Caesar. The fierceness of the political struggles in the Roman republic were illustrated when the ruins of Pompeii were excavated. Tombstones were found bearing appeals to political agents to abstain from painting their candidates' names on them.

In the Roman empire the ruin of small farmers, the wastefulness of slave labour, the condition of the poor freemen who lived on the free distribution of corn and sold their votes, all contributed to the decline of Rome when it could no longer depend upon the pouring in of wealth from foreign conquests. Slaves escaped and settled on land, others were given their freedom in return for land and labour dues. As Roman power commenced to disintegrate, owing to invasion from outside and disorder inside, tribal chiefs and civil and clerical potentates set up stronghold castles against the warring bands that were ravaging Europe, and fought each other and the central power for land, eventually growing into feudal proprietors in gradations up to bishops, princelings and kings.

The traders who visited these castles eventually became so numerous that they could not be housed. Burghs, or ramparts, were built around these castles to house the traders. Later burghs for the traders were built apart from the castles. In these burghs, or townships, which developed their own jurisdiction, guilds grew up. First merchant guilds to defend foreign traders, then artisans, attracted by the collecting of merchants in favourable spots, formed craft guilds to defend crafts and customs. New townships sprang up on waste land and, in these, workshops or small factories grew up financed by wealthy traders and free from the impositions of feudal restrictions. All these new towns provided markets for feudal produce, broke down the closely knit feudal communities and commenced the destruction of the feudal system. Incidentally, the traders originated largely from vagabonds of all kinds including escaped serfs.

The Crusades, the spread of money payments, the periodical fairs, the substitution of money rents for bond servitude, the driving of peasants off the land to make way for sheep for wool production, and other economic developments, finally set the scene for capitalism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and brought about the English and French revolutions which consolidated the political power of the capitalists as a class.

Later still the manufacturing section of the capitalist class grew in influence and struggled with the financial and landowning interests for participation in political control. By the middle of the last century they achieved their object in England with the help of the workers – and then turned against the workers when the latter were striving for political representation.

History has seen the rise and fall of civilisations. Some early civilisations have relapsed from a high state of achievement to a lower owing to the effects of conquest – like the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Arabs and the Ottoman Turks. These people were responsible for accomplishments like geometry, the compass, gunpowder, and advances in medicine, architecture and craftsmanship that are remarkable considering the relative smallness of their populations compared with modern times. Some early civilisations, like that of the Indus, have left relics of their immense achievements buried in the sands.

In most instances what these civilisations achieved was eventually passed on to their conquerors. All modern developments have been built up out of the work of past generations and would not have been attained now without the work that was done in remote ages. Like the traditions, the work of past generations lives on in the brain of the living.

## ***Economic Conditions and War.***

WHEN BRITAIN conquered India, annexed territories in Africa and got a foothold in China it was alleged to be done for the benefit of the inhabitants - raising India from poverty, civilising the poor black man and converting the "heathen" Chinese to the benefits of Christianity. But what were the facts behind the illusions? The facts were the economic interests of the British trader and manufacturer pursued with a ruthless disregard of the interests of those whom they were exploiting.

In the twenties when there was agitation about the position of India, Britain's largest colonial possession, Sir William Joynson-Hicks (later Lord Brentford) a leading Conservative protested against the canting attitudes of some of his associates. He was reported in the Daily News (17.10.1925) as follows:

"We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know it is said at missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as the outlet for the goods of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword and by the sword we should hold it . . . "

"I am stating facts. . . We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general, and for Lancashire cotton goods in particular."

On the raping of India, Brooks Adams, in his "The Law of Civilization and Decay", has this to say:

"Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while thirty millions of human beings were reduced to the extremity of wretchedness." (p. 255)

"Possibly since the world began, no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years. Great Britain stood without a competitor." (p. 263).

Digby, in his "Prosperous British India" estimated that there were 70 million continually hungry people in British India at the beginning of the present century. Some of our "old nobility" owed their rise to the oceans of treasure that flowed to them from India. And the representatives of the spiritual reflex of these plunderers took balm to the Indians to assuage their sorrows but not to remove the cause of them.

The present troubles in Rhodesia bring to mind the raping of Africa by Western traders and settlers. In earlier days the slave traders ruined the prosperous native regions in the East; collecting hundreds of thousands of its highly educated and accomplished people and transporting them, like cattle, in overcrowded ships under shocking conditions to work as chattel slaves in the Southern states of America. In later times the colonising of Africa by Portuguese, Belgian, German and British companies brought nothing but misery to the black inhabitants, and untold wealth to their exploiters. That is the real monument to Cecil Rhodes, the founder of Rhodesia.

Writing of the discovery of gold in South Africa, Justin McCarthy, in his "Short History of Our Own Times" said this:

"The discovery of the gold mines had brought into South Africa a rush of adventurous immigrants from various parts of the world, especially from England and from British territories, whose principal object was to make themselves the absolute rulers of all that vast tract of country which was teeming with limitless sources of wealth. The established republics were not strong enough to secure themselves against the internal disturbances to be expected from such an invasion." (p. 538)

The plundering for gold and diamonds brought on the war against the Boers in defence of the plunderers. In the South African House of Assembly on May 8th, 1913 the minister for mines stated that "No less than 10,000 people die in these mines every year - men in the prime of health."

In connection with the concession to the chartered company, founded by Cecil Rhodes, the "News and Leader" (31.3.1914) summarised the attitude of the natives to the Hut tax and various other burdens imposed on the natives to force them into working in the mines:

"The prevalent land-owning custom in Europe is private ownership. In Africa it is communal ownership. Therefore, if we hand over great tracts of the territory to private owners and those private

owners proceed to exact rents or grazing dues, the African native does not regard that as normal economic development. He regards it as an act of aggression, of conquest -an arbitrary charge wrung from him in bitterness, and leaving behind a deep sense of injury. That resentment has been the cause of most of the African wars and rebellions since the first presence of the white man in Africa."

What a strange creature the African native is! His land is stolen from him; he is charged rent for living on it and grazing his cattle and he feels resentful and bitter. How extraordinary! Then, to add insult to injury, the Church sent out missionaries to teach him to be humble and subservient and to turn the cheek to the smiter!

In the 18th and 19th centuries the East India company gradually insinuated itself into China. The principal article the East India company dealt in was opium; which grew in India and was sold in China. In 1834 this company's exclusive privileges, ceased and private traders took over the sale of opium, which they bought from the company.

Laws were passed by the Chinese government prohibiting the traffic in opium but the British government officials protected the smuggling of opium. Justin McCarthy tells how matters proceeded in 1842:

"When the Chinese authorities actually proceeded to insist on the forfeiture of an immense amount of opium in the hands of British traders, and took other harsh but certainly not unnatural measures to extinguish the traffic. Captain Elliot, the Chief Superintendent, sent to the Governor of India a 'request for as many ships of war as could be spared for the protection of life and property of Englishmen in China. Before long British ships arrived and the two countries were at war.'" (p. 27)

The Chinese were worsted in the Opium war and had to cede the island of Hong Kong in perpetuity; five ports. Canton, Amoy, Foo-Chow, Ningpo and Shanghai were thrown open to British trade and consuls were established there. The final indignity - China had to pay one and a half million pounds in indemnity for smuggled opium that had been destroyed. Try and smuggle a wristwatch into England nowadays and you will not only have to pay heavily but will suffer moral opprobrium - and maybe prison. How economic circumstances change moral attitudes.

The present furore about dope taking shows how the chickens have come home to roost with a vengeance.

However, de Gibbins in his "Industrial History of England" finds a silver lining to the cloud:

"The Chinese wars of 1842 and 1857, regrettable as they were, established our commercial relations with the East generally upon a firm footing, and since then our trade with Eastern nations has largely developed." (p.219)

Lately, withdrawal from the East, owing to economic and political developments in that area, has knocked the silver out of the cloud.

Turning to the American Civil war during the eighteen-sixties, although it is alleged to have been a war over slavery, it was in fact not a question of whether or not the slaves should be emancipated but whether the North should continue to be ruled by a land-hungry South.

Whilst slave production was profitable to all the slates, North and South, there was no opposition to it on any large scale. The opposition from the North only came when it threatened to interfere with the expansion of the Northern manufacturing and commercial interests. When this happened the moral objections to slavery suddenly became popular in the North as a reflection of these threatened economic interests.

The South only produced raw material which it exported - cotton, sugar, tobacco and rice - it depended for nearly everything else upon import from outside.

These raw materials were only profitable when produced by large gangs of slaves on a large scale, and demanded constantly increasing territory. The land hunger of the South extended right across the continent and was spreading North where it came into conflict with the freeholding farmers. The South obtained manufactured goods from the North which satisfied Northern manufacturers until their

railway, banking and other proposals for expansion were obstructed by Southern restrictions in the Senate and Supreme Court, which were dominated by the slave-owning element.

The Southerners dominated politics through their control of the Democratic party, which was pro-slavery. The situation commenced to boil up when the Southerners tried to get control of territory in Kansas by expelling freeholders to make way for plantations. This split the Democratic party, the Northern section favouring a limit to slave territorial expansion. A Republican party was then formed in 1856 in the Great Lake region, which extended its influence and put forward a platform limiting the further extension of slavery and confining it to the slave states that existed at the time. To this party belonged some genuine abolitionists like Horace Greeley, Dana, Brisbane and Longfellow.

As the Northern commercial and manufacturing interests began to move over to the support of the Republican party they were enabled, through the split in the Democratic party, to secure the election of President Lincoln in 1860. He was the nominee of the Great Lake region which had nothing to gain from Southern supremacy.

In 1860 not more than ten thousand out of the nine million Southern whites were the economic, social and political rulers of the South. The clergy and professional elements supported them. The mass was made up largely of poor whites. At the time the civil war broke out the South owed huge debts to the North, which they promptly repudiated. Thus the North was bound by the interests of its commercial rulers to fight against the secession policy of the South.

Incidentally the Northern manufacturers not only supplied defective guns to their own army but they also supplied the South with ammunition etc. Like the English merchants who sold cloth to clothe Napoleon's troops during the war with France. Where economic interests are involved patriotism and morality go by the board.

There is a popular belief that Lincoln was the champion of the movement to abolish slavery. This is not true. His declared aim was "to save the union" with or without slavery. In a debate with Steven A. Douglas he gave his views on the position concerning negroes:

"I am not in favour of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office . . . I am not in favour of negro citizenship." (p.30)

The Civil War by Henry Hansen, published by Mentor.

He was ready to see the fugitive slave law enforced. Under this law any slave who escaped from a plantation to free territory had to be sent back to the plantation. On November 30th 1860 he wrote to Alexander H. Stevens, a Georgia politician:

"Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would directly or indirectly interfere with their slaves or with them about their slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you . . . that there is no cause for such fears." (Hansen p.30)

Referring to Lincoln's Inaugural Address when he took office on the 4th March 1861, Hansen makes the following comments:

"Lincoln spoke calmly and without rancour. He repeated his declaration that he had no purpose. to interfere with slavery in the States where it existed. He would execute the laws in all the - States, since he considered the Union unbroken." (p.47)

The North was successful in the war because of its manufacturing superiority, and not because of any moral purpose. After the war the era of the great trusts began which produced millionaires such as Jay Gould, Marshall Field, Vanderbilt, Carnegie and Pierpont Morgan

Finally all modern wars have been capitalist wars. The motives that have inspired them have been economic. This was true of the first and second world wars, the Korean war and the war in Vietnam as well as of the clash between India and Pakistan and the numerous wars that have not received as much publicity.

## ***The Class Struggle***

WE HAVE MADE references to the class struggle contained within the theory of the materialist conception, and that these struggles have resulted in changes in the basis of society.

A class is a group of people united by a common interest. Economically, a group with 'basically similar economic interests. The class struggle is the struggle between social classes with different economic interests, that is different positions in society in relation to the production and distribution of the social wealth - the working class and the capitalist class, the feudal proprietors and the rising capitalists, each class striving to obtain control of political power so that society shall be organised to suit their interest. Thus all class struggles are political struggles, aimed at getting control of state power.

With the advent of private property in the past the state grew to defend property, against any encroachment upon it. Consequently any class that sought to change the framework of society to suit its interests had first of all to get control of the state, the organised power of coercion, or be powerful enough to influence its operations.

Mankind differs from all other animals in that whereas they draw their subsistence direct from nature with the use of their physical organs unassisted by anything else, men make contrivances that enlarge the power and scope of their organs and enable them to get more from nature with less effort. In other words man builds an artificial barrier between himself and nature by his inventions, contrivances and social arrangements. In the course of time this barrier has more and more influence on the way he thinks and acts because of its social consequences. Thus it comes about that it is the inventions and not the intentions of man which have raised him above the purely animal world; and that have given rise to ideas of liberty, of justice, and of equality at different times. These concepts that are alleged to be absolute are really, like everything else, relative, depending upon changing social systems as well as upon social position. They differ between historical periods and also between people within the same period.

Since the coming of private property moral, intellectual, political and religious ideas have been bound up with different forms of private ownership. These forms of property have split society into antagonistic classes which have engaged in bitter class struggles, each class striving to dominate society and serve its own interests. As we look back through history we see that it is made up of these class conflicts, and that they are the vital thread from which progress has been woven - meaning by progress an ever wider adaptation to natural forces and the bringing nearer of the possibility of humanity, as a whole, achieving comfort and security.

Each new form of production has brought into being new social classes, a change in social relations, a change in political alignment, and a change in current ideas. The freeman and slave of antiquity looked upon the social world through different eyes from those of the feudal lord and bondsman of the middle ages, and likewise the capitalist and the worker of today have different ideas from those of their medieval counterparts. To understand the ideas of a period it is necessary to examine the economic framework of the period from which the ideas are derived, because the economic framework is the dominating influence. Ideas carried over from old outworn systems are carried over into the new, but these traditions are forced into the mould of the new system, though they may have some influence on the shape of the mould. One has only to consider what Christianity is now and what it was a thousand years ago to appreciate this.

The confused social outlook of a period, including the present, is the outcome of the mixture of ideas thrown up by the different classes that together make up society, but the prevailing, or the most insistent and politically supreme, ideas are those backed by the dominant class; they remain so until another class becomes sufficiently strong, and conscious of its interests, to challenge the dominant class and get control of state power.

In the past society has been made up of a number of conflicting classes - monarchs, landowners, traders, peasants, workers - but under capitalism these classes have been reduced to two, workers and

capitalists. The modern struggle is between these two classes, and capitalism has now become a fetter on further social development. To free society of war, crises, unemployment, poverty, the workers must capture control of the state and introduce a new system, one in which the means of production and distribution will be owned in common by the whole of society.

## ***The Development of the State***

THE STATE is the public power of coercion. It makes and administers the laws. It is controlled by the social class that is economically supreme. In antiquity it was the slave owners, under feudalism the feudal proprietors, today the capitalist class.

The state had its beginning with the birth of private property, and commenced with the limitations of property within the tribe. Members of the tribe were appointed to guard the rights of property. The extension of the operations of the private owners outside the tribal limits extended their functions.

As tribal society disintegrated the incipient state was personified in the warrior chief and his followers. These chiefs over-ran other territories and, like the Spartans and the Normans, established themselves as ruling bodies. In the early civilisations of Babylon and Egypt the military rulers became 'both priests and lawgivers, and the laws were administered at the gates of the temples.

The growth of trading and the splitting up of society into classes strengthened the influence and power of the growing state. It was the only body that stood apart from the various sections of society and the obvious body to promulgate laws with power to enforce them.

The early form of the state was rude and barbarous and exercised open force. It was also an object of struggle between the social classes, because the class that was paramount had the power to enforce its will. It was a state form in harmony with the old arrangements of people living in fortified villages surrounded by agricultural territory.

The growth of the small Roman state into the overlordship of a multitude of similar states throughout Europe and part of Africa and Asia, brought up a host of administrative problems that caused a vast growth of officials, and a bureaucracy that covered with a net-work the whole unwieldy Roman empire. It was largely a tax-gathering machine. It was also a spur to the study of the use and abuses of private property. It brought about the production of a vast mass of laws and methods of procedure, a good deal of which has lasted to the present day.

Very little progress was made in the development of the State from Roman times until the modern state began to emerge in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with the opening up of world markets and the rise of capitalism.

The growth of the state in England is a fair specimen of its growth elsewhere.

England was settled by different nomadic tribes both before and after the Roman conquest. The population was small and the country covered with woods. In Anglo-Saxon times the early kings were leaders of war bands, but, as consolidation developed, tribal kingdoms became administrative districts of larger kingdoms until, in the 9th century, the country was brought under the control of one king. The king was elected by leaders sitting in council.

By 1066 the local government divisions of shire, hundred, borough, and township had grown out of the swallowing up of earlier tribal kingdoms by larger ones, but the local settlement of disputes under the manorial system left little room for royal intervention.

During the middle ages the King's Council ruled. The offshoots of the council - the Star Chamber, the Court of High Commission, the Councils of the North and of Ireland and Wales, were the centres of public business.

The differentiation of function necessary for efficient administration brought about control of the police by officers appointed by the Crown and responsible to it alone. This also inspired the tendency to delegate work to specialised commissions - for piracy, coinage, etc. - but also the strengthening of central control, and the system of uniformity of weights and measures.

The Black Death of 1348 wiped out a large part of the population, and war with France spread confusion and disorder. Local control was further weakened by the disintegration of the manorial system and the effect of the crusades. Henceforth the central government undertook the regulation of economic matters by proclamations and statutes. In 1526 the Privy Council' was established.

The breaking down of old financial resources compelled the Crown to call together members from the boroughs and shires to advance money to help the treasury. This led to the Crown having constantly to explain its difficulties to the Houses of Parliament through the mouths of members of the House.

After the English revolution and the Restoration the heads of departments never returned to their old dependence on the Crown. The Cabinet Council first appeared in the time of Charles I, it later supplanted for executive purpose the Privy Council and the committees of the council. The practice of governing by departments was reached by the middle of the 18th century. Then the state grew up into what it is today - the executive of the capitalist class.

Through working class pressure and the disagreements between sections of the capitalist class the workers have obtained the vote, and therefore the capacity to get control of state power and reorganise society on a different basis. At present they simply vote supporters of the capitalists into power to rule in the interests of the capitalist class.

## ***Dialectical Materialism***

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM, a misused concept which grew in popularity with those who defend the tortuous policies of capitalist Russia and other State capitalist countries, acquired the mystical characters of reconciling all points of view even the most contradictory.

So far as concerns its use in socialist propaganda, dialectical materialism made its appearance when Marx borrowed from Hegel the dialectical or evolutionary method of examining Man, his history and his works. But Marx reversed Hegel's method of approach to the world. To Hegel, the world was a reflection of the thought processes in man's head. He was an Idealist. To Marx, thought process was a reflection of an actual world process. He was a materialist. Hegel built his philosophical system at a time when the old, static world of feudalism was being rent by the birth of capitalism, and accepted ways and ideas were being buried into a tormented melting pot. The newly-born world was problematical, and struggling into shape. Nothing was settled. All was changing.

But whereas Hegelianism was impregnated with the idea of universal change (even though upside down) the confused, contradictory and changing policies of Soviet Russia bewilder its adherents and drive them back into a different and bastardised Hegelianism with leadership as the absolute concept. Is there a contradiction between principles and policy? No matter! An understanding of dialectics will show that everything is all right in this best of all possible Russian worlds. If the Russian workers are "free" to control their own destiny but must obey the dictates of the Stalin or Brezhnev oligarchies; if the capitalist class is the enemy and yet Russia concludes alliances with them; if imperialism is a capitalist method of fleecing and yet the "Workers' Republic" fights for markets and spheres of influence, don't worry! Dialectics explains and solves these contradictions. The more incomprehensible dialectics appears to the ordinary worker, the firmer the bonds of leadership are riveted upon him and the higher the self-appointed interpreters climb.

### **Dialectics means Evolution**

At the time when Marx was preparing to write his analysis of capitalism, the word "evolution" was not current as an expression covering the process of the development of world capitalism. Although many thinkers recognised that certain changes occurred in nature and history, they had not yet grasped the fact that the process was universal, complementary and unified. They used the expression, "development hypo-thesis," to describe the growth of one form into another, within one species. The change from one species into another had not yet been recognised and was to become part of a larger outlook, the evolutionary one.

It is significant from this point of view that the word "evolution" does not appear anywhere in the Communist Manifesto, the outlook of which is now recognised as evolutionary. Evolution as an expression covering the comprehensive developmental point of view became recognised with the appearance of Darwin's Origin of Species, in which was proclaimed the theory of organic evolution. This book appeared in 1859, the same year in which Marx's Critique of Political Economy appeared, and by that time Marx had written most of the manuscript that eventually appeared under the title "Capital." Thus most of Marx's important works were either published or in manuscript form before the word "evolution" had become current as the expression of all that is bound up with the process of universal, progressive and unending change, including the mechanism that accomplishes the changes.

To the advanced thinkers of Marx's day, "dialectics" signified the science of the process by which change occurred. Since then, dialectical has been replaced by evolutionary and the older word is largely forgotten by all but the out-of-date philosophers living among cobwebs, and the advocates of that modern monstrosity, Russian "Communism." Each scientist is, and must be, an evolutionist in his own field of research, and is therefore, to that extent, a materialist. It is only when he leaves his field, particularly when he looks at society and religion, that he is likely to abandon science and enter the realms of fantasy. The weight of society and traditions, in these particular directions, is heavier than in others because here a scientific outlook is a danger to the existing social arrangements.

What Marx and Engels meant by dialectics was made clear in the latter's book, *Anti-Duhring*, written with the assistance of Marx. In this book Engels, when referring to the negation of the negation, and having instanced the growth of a grain of barley to a crop-bearing plant, etc., says:

"If I say that all these processes constitute the negation of the negation, I embrace them all under this one law of progress and leave the distinctive features of each special process without particular notice. The dialectic is, as a matter of fact, nothing but the science of the universal laws of motion and evolution in nature, human society and thought." (*Landmarks of Scientific Socialism - Anti-Duhring. Kerr edition 1907. p. 173*).

He further says about modern materialism: "It is in a special sense no philosophy but a single concept of the universe which has to prove and realise itself, not in a science of sciences apart, but in actual science."

### The mechanism of change

Now to understand the process of change in any particular department of knowledge you must discover the laws, the uniformity in the apparently haphazard and this is just what scientists do. They discover the laws in that particular department by applying the evolutionary concept. Evolution does not merely signify that there is perpetual change, but that the changes are an unfolding and further development of forces within that which is changing. The direction of the change is determined by the alignment of internal constituents and the impact of external. Everything is a part of an unending world process, no section of which can be isolated except in thought. And even when isolating everything in thought it must still be studied in connection with other things.

Change, then, consists of a combination, dissolution and recombination of elements in an ascending series, that is to say, an ever more complicated arrangement of elements. Existence is only a temporary equilibrium of opposing elements always in motion, that at a certain stage, bursts apart and forms a new combination when one element becomes present in greater abundance than another or the relation between internal quantities changes. In analysing these progressive combinations, scientists discover the numerous laws that govern such progressive movement enabling them to fore-tell with varying degrees of accuracy the future developments. Absolute accuracy is impossible because knowledge is limited by the fact that all the items which go to make up the changing world process are so vast that they are outside the capacity of any individual, group, class, or nation. Absolute accuracy would demand the sum of the knowledge of things that have not yet swung into the human orbit. But still the limited accuracy is sufficient to enable humanity to build ships, aeroplanes, factories, rockets, atom bombs and all the rest.

### Confused "dialecticians"

To illustrate the subject let us glance at two or three interpretations of the laws of dialectical materialism by two writers who published short books on the subject, David Guest and Edward Conze. Guest, in his "Dialectical Materialism," quotes the second law of dialectics as follows: "The law of unity is interpenetration, identity of opposites." This is the phrase he uses and later quotes Lenin's blessing for the same wording.

Note the word "identity." Opposites cannot be identical as long as they are opposites, and to say that one cannot exist without the other is not very illuminating because a thing cannot be opposite to nothing. It must be opposite to something that is opposite to it. Marx didn't mix unity with identity. Writing of the two poles of the expression of value in the first chapter of *Capital*, he said: "The relative form and the equivalent form are two intimately connected, mutually and inseparable elements of the expression of value,' but at the same time are mutually exclusive, antagonistic extremes, that is poles of the same expression." That is Marx's wording and that is the essence of the matter. Mutually dependent, inseparable but mutually exclusive. Identity of opposites is just nonsense.

And referring to the inner contradiction in opposite sides of society, Guest makes the following remarks:

"Marx found the basis of the class struggle to lie in a contradiction between the methods of production and the existing social relationships. It is this contradiction which, during a certain historic period gets expressed in an external antagonism of classes. When this is so, one class represents the force of production seeking to expand and another class represents those social relations which are hemming in the productive forces. *But the basic contradiction will continue to exist in classless society and will cause a progressive development of social relationships as the productive forces themselves develop.*" (emphasis ours)

In this last sentence we can see the creeping paralysis of Russian propaganda. The basic contradiction is the contradiction between the method of production and the existing social relationships but, according to Guest, it will continue to exist under communism. In his breathless pursuit of contradictions he makes the mistake of thinking that they must always be of the same kind, and he has missed the basic contradiction which will be solved for good and all - the contradiction between social production and private ownership which originated in primitive society, developed during succeeding centuries and will be finally solved by socialism.

Now let us take two examples of Conze's interpretation of dialectical materialism as contained in his book: "An Introduction to Dialectical Materialism." Conze is also in a jam over the question of opposites as can be seen by this gem: "I know no general reason why opposites always must be united. The study of scientific method is not yet advanced enough to give us proof of this kind." Conze has evidently walked up the wrong street. The human race in its wisdom has decided that when two things turn up in a certain relationship to each other they will be called opposites. As long as the human race sticks to this view we can't have one opposite on its own. Conze is apparently prepared to concede that all the black door handles that have so far turned up have been black, but does not rule out the possibility that some day a black door handle may appear that is white!

## Love and hate

On another page, Conze, with the backing of Freud, gives us this information:

"Freud has shown that we can have no feeling of love towards anyone without simultaneously having a more-or-less feeling of hatred towards the same person. And vice versa. No hatred can exist without containing some love. Love is the regular component of hatred, even if the quantity of love is sometimes microscopic."

That is a peculiar way of looking at the unity of opposites. On the basis of this we can prove anything and get nowhere.

But let us see if we can translate it into something more obvious. A wooden stick has two ends. They are the names we give to two opposite parts of the stick, and while the stick exists as a stick the ends exist as separate, antagonistic, mutually dependent opposites. As long as we retain our sanity the ends will appear to us as two different parts of this stick, and we can't have even a microscopic bit of one end exist-ing alongside, let alone inside the other. Of course we can throw the stick in a fire and put the same end to both, but this is a different end altogether. Let us use language reasonably and for its purpose.

Love and hate are two opposite expressions of a common human emotion. They cannot both exist at the same time for the same object but they can alternate, or they can both dwindle with the dwindling of emotion.

But let us look at love and hatred from the point of view of the development of these two poles for the expression of emotion and not their temporary equilibrium in an individual who both loves and hates. Human emotion develops until it becomes differentiated into what we call love and hatred. In its earlier development the distinction is blurred but in the course of time it becomes clearly defined and it is love and hatred as such, and as opposition, that Conze is writing about.

Love is love and not hate, and in a given situation they are mutually exclusive. Mixing interpenetration with identity seems to be the cause of the confusion. If we pass our finger along the stick we come to a point where it is neither one end nor the other; but we never have our finger on a little bit of one end and a large part of the other. What happens is that one end passes into the other.

There is a progressive change in nature, and thought, an evolution. What does this mean? It means a movement from the simple to the complex, an evermore complicated mixture of a comparatively few elements. An example might make this clearer. A modern piece of highly developed mechanism such as an aeroplane engine, is a mystifying sight to the uninitiated, and yet it is made up of a multitude of simple movements that taken by themselves, would mystify nobody. The human mind thrives by learning and contriving and thus craves for an evermore complicated life. It is more satisfying and therefore progressive, to the majority in the long run.

## Evolution of society

Let us now complete the picture by an illustration of the laws that Marx borrowed from Hegel and applied in his own investigations. We will take an example from the evolution of society, as that is our particular concern. In pre-historic times man lived in small communities beset by forces of nature he was not yet able to control or to which he could not adjust. But the simple means of production were commonly owned. These means of production were barely sufficient to enable each member of the community to sustain life and reproduce his kind.

Ill the course of time, man multiplied, but the means of production multiplied at a greater rate until what was produced was more than sufficient to supply each with the necessaries of life. When this expansion had reached a certain point, the idea was born into the minds of some men that it was possible to live without working if they could persuade or force others to work for them. In order to accomplish this, a portion of the means of production that belonged to the community had to be converted into the private possession of some members of the community. An internal struggle then began that ended in the establishment of private ownership of the means of production.

Since that time a constant struggle has been carried on during which the whole of the earth has become populated and private property has run a course from the ownership of a few acres of land, a small herd of animals, and a few tools, until it has reached dimensions that can no longer be controlled by one individual or one family. Private property in the means of production and distribution has become uncontrollable and threatens the stability of society.

But this development of private property has also brought about a change in the working-class, to the point that they, the producers, now occupy all positions in production and distribution. The owners have been largely relegated to the position of mere consumers of wealth, in the production of which they, as a class, take no part.

A result of this development is the growth, in the minds of the producers, of the idea that the owners are no longer necessary. The revolt against the owners, grows in volume and in time will reach a point where the producers will set about abolishing the private ownership of the means of production and substituting for it common ownership. But this common ownership will not be the small community ownership of primitive society, it will be a common ownership that welds the whole of mankind into one universal society, and each member will be able to live a secure and full life as a consequence of the past achievements of private property.

## How social evolution moves

Social evolution moves in a spiral, coming back, not to its starting point, but to a point above the starting point. Let us apply the dialectical materialism of Marx to the development we have described. First, the statement that an increase in quantity beyond a certain point results in a change in quality. The increase in the means of production and the product changed the social form from communist society to private property society and will change the latter into a higher form of communist society. Communist society was negated by private property society and this will in time be negated by a higher form of communist society: the negation of the negation. The entire process is accomplished by the growth of antagonism and the solving of antagonism. The elements that have changed the form of society were contained within the original communal communities. The unity in the whole process is social Man. The contradictions are the contrary outlook arising from the growth of the means of production and the solution is the reduction of these outlooks to one common outlook.

What we have described is the evolution of society, but only in a broad sweep. Social science describes this process in detail, but only a few of the social scientists are free from the influence of private property ideas upon thought. And consequently the nearer they come to the present, the less scientific are their conclusions. It is one thing to learn the laws of scientific thinking, but quite another to apply those laws to social life. One of those fundamental laws is that there is nothing absolute, or static; all is relative, changing. But in the course of these changes the relation of one thing to another is a temporary equilibrium.

The capitalist and the worker are a unity as portions of mankind and portions of human society. They are in contradiction as opposing elements in a capitalist system of production. This contradiction will only be solved by the abolition of capitalist society. But this abolition can only lead to harmony by the substitution of a higher form of society for capitalism. This, in turn, can only be achieved by the single-minded struggle for socialism.

Thus the dialectical materialism of Marx is simply the science of the universal laws of motion and evolution in nature, human society and thought.

## ***Some Questions Considered***

### **A few words on morality**

WHAT WILL be the position in future society with regard to morality, when property, privilege and classes have disappeared? What are generally mistaken for moral views are emotional reactions. We are stirred with indignation at times by some fact or action that runs contrary to our feelings, or we are stirred with pleasure at something that is in accord with our feelings. These feelings are largely the result of what we have been taught from childhood. And this again depends upon the social system into which we have 'been born. Morality consists simply of rules of conduct.

In all societies there must be rules of conduct or the society would fall to pieces. Thus in a future society, when it has been established, there will also be rules of conduct in harmony with its social basis. As socialist society will be a free and harmonious association of people without special privileges it will not be necessary to have a state power to enforce these rules. The moral outlook will be the custom - just as the moral outlook was the custom in tribal societies. What these rules of conduct will be we don't know yet, cluttered up as we are with all the paraphernalia of today. But we can anticipate that harmony, kindness, generosity and a goodfellowship, such as the property world has not yet experienced, will be the principal ingredients.

### **How Marx saw it**

Does Marxism imply that everything Marx said or wrote . is gospel? Of course not. It simply means that a certain attitude, a method of investigation adopted by Marx has been thoroughly tested and found to be scientifically correct. The materialist conception of history is such a method of investigation. That men must eat and drink, propagate their kind, find a way of producing and getting food and drink, a place in which to cook, eat and drink and sleep, are facts beyond dispute. That in doing these things they must enter into relations with each other, and that these relations influence their thoughts and actions are also matters beyond dispute. So is the fact that social history has been an evolutionary process regardless of whether the result has been good or bad for humanity. No reasonable person with any claim to knowledge can deny these facts. How far these influences extend is the only question upon which there is dispute. Yet obtaining the means of living is the preponderating influence in everyone's life, therefore it must be the dominating influence in history, though, of course, not the only influence. This is all that Marxism claims. It is a method based on facts and their logical co-ordination. Thus Marxism is not a dogma, though some who claim adherence to this method may be dogmatic. That Marx may have erred here and there in his estimation of certain facts and the degree of their influence has no bearing on the correctness or otherwise of the method of investigation.

Thinking is done in a social world that is evolving and about a social world that is evolving; change is also, therefore, one of the elements of thought.

Man's social thought and action is dependent upon the special character of the environment in which he lives. He can act upon and modify this environment, but only in accordance with the elements contained within it.

This is the essence of the Materialist Conception of History.

### **"Great Men"**

We have already referred to the mistaken idea that history has been the result of the activities of "Great Men", but this must not be taken to mean that the discoveries, inventions, and actions of particular individuals in the past have had no influence on the course of history. Whilst the work of such people has not been the directing element in history (except in limited instances), as some have claimed, yet they have had at times an influence in the working out and shaping of historical events.

Columbus, by his discovery of the "New World" set in motion a train of events that altered the line up of European nations, flooded Europe with precious metals, and ultimately led to the building up of America to what it is today. Explorers have opened up lands in different parts of the world to trading and sources of raw material that helped to build up capitalism. The Wright brothers by producing the first aeroplane that could really fly made ocean travel a matter of hours instead of weeks, and set in motion a train of events that altered the method of warfare and eventually led to the use of the atom and hydrogen bombs. Even the emperor Constantine, by introducing bond service on his estates in the East, set on foot a move towards feudalism, and established Christianity as the state religion in harmony with its hierarchical gradations.

Many thinkers and investigators in various fields of study have added their quota in social progress. They have acquired a greater insight into the workings of social and political events than their fellows and have passed this information on to help bring about a greater understanding of society and its development. This occurred with men such as Aristotle, Copernicus, Darwin, Marx and Einstein. Darwin by his work on evolution brought it into the concept of the development of society. Marx, by his studies, made possible the explanation of the evolution of society. Einstein, by his work on mathematics and his theory of relativity provided, amongst other things, a basis for the exploration of the universe.

Other men, by their energy and ambitious designs have also, however unintentionally, had an influence on the course of history, such as Caesar, Mohammed, Cromwell and Napoleon. It is true that all these people were products of the material conditions of their time, but they were also a part of the material influences. All of them, however, could only work within the conditions and the limits of their particular time.

## Persistence of the communist idea

One of the traditions of past generations concerns the old communist ideas of primitive times that have run like a thread through all history, coming to the surface during social upheavals. An example of this, which reads strangely modern, occurred in Egypt three to four thousand years ago. In Lower Egypt during the tenth dynasty foreign immigrants brought with them communistic ideas - probably Semites from Syria. A revolt broke out at the time when rulers had wasted strength in petty wars. A contemporary writer, Ipuiver, describes what happened:

"The King has been overthrown: the treasury is the common property of everybody. Officials have been murdered and their papers have been taken away. The poor of the land have become rich, the owners of property now have nothing. He who was once a messenger, now gives orders to messengers.

Gold and precious stones adorn the necks of female servants, and though good things are in the land, the mistresses of houses would say: 'Would that we had something to eat'. He who had no bread is now the owner of a barn, and his cupboards are filled with other people's goods. Princes are starving in distress: noble ladies go hungry. People's faces are pale for the criminal is at large. There is no one left in authority. The corn crops have perished on every side. No one ploughs his fields, Men eat grass and wash it down with water. More-over, sickness rages throughout the land."

Arthur Weigall in "*History of the Pharaohs*" (Vol. I p. 282).

This heart cry is probably exaggerated. However it is illuminating. The revolt was suppressed 'by the intervention of the rulers of Upper Egypt.

## Conclusion

When Marx had settled his account with philosophy, cleared his mind and developed his materialist conception of history, he commenced an investigation into capitalist society, using his new historical tool for the purpose. The result he incorporated in his book *Capital*.

He found that capitalism was based upon the production of commodities, useful articles capable of production and reproduction for exchange for the sole purpose of profit. That this system, which had turned the world into a vast storehouse of wealth and brought about marvels in inventions, discoveries, and productive methods, was, at the same time, the root of the evils that capitalism could not eradicate -

crises, wars, poverty, crime, and the jungle world of ruthless competition. The capitalists thrived and grew rich out of the work of a propertyless working class. That the combination of capitalist groups brought about a concentration of industry into the hands of fewer and fewer huge enterprises, driving the small proprietor out altogether or converting him into little more than an overworked salesman for the large combines.

Along with all this the capitalist, personally, was becoming a mere drawer of interest and dividends, squeezed out of a major role in production whilst the worker, whether manager, foreman or ordinary wage worker, was doing the work necessary for feeding, clothing and housing the population. Thus the idea was growing amongst the workers that the capitalist was an unnecessary burden, living like a leech on their backs. The worker, therefore, was the element that would dig the grave of capitalism, just as the capitalist had been the element that dug the grave of feudalism.

When the workers acquire a full and clear recognition of these facts they will organise to abolish the capitalist basis of society and replace it by another system which will relieve them of their burdens; a system based upon the common ownership of the means of production and distribution - a socialist system not a state capitalist system as in Russia and other so-called communist countries. At the same time, conflicting classes, privileges, and all the other encumbrances of a production for profit system will disappear. It will be possible to plan social arrangements on such a basis of equality that all will be enabled to live secure and useful lives, controlling their own destiny and opening up progressive possibilities so far undreamed of.

Marx disclosed in his "Capital" the way the capitalist is enabled to live off the worker. By producing wealth for the capitalist the worker is at the same time forging his industrial chains. The worker receives for his work wages or salaries that only cover his cost of subsistence. These wages or salaries are less in value than the value of the product he produces. The difference between the value of what he gets, and spends to keep himself, and the value of what he produces is a surplus which the capitalist takes and converts into rent, interest, profit and capital for further investment. Thus the capitalist grows rich out of the exploitation of the workers, and there is no end to this as long as capitalism lasts, whatever form it may present.

As the workers begin to understand this process the impetus to abolish the system grows and also the idea of replacing it by a socialist system.

These were the facts, and the logical inferences from them, that Marx drew by his investigations into the development of capitalism by applying the materialist conception of history. It was not wishful thinking as claimed by some who were still blinded by the intricacies of capitalism, and who were prepared to accept the materialist conception of history as applied to the past but shied away from applying it to capitalism.

Marx's theory of history and his investigations into capitalist production have made clear that socialism is the next system that will come into being in the development of human society, no matter how long it may take. How soon it will come depends upon the understanding, the desire, and the energy of the working class, because they are the principal means of its accomplishment. This pamphlet is one of the instruments aimed at helping to reach this end.

## ***Appendix I – Some Forerunners***

Vague ideas of the materialist conception of history were known before Marx formulated his view. In the sixteenth century, when capitalism was making serious inroads into feudalism, a number of writers criticised the new procedures, most of them looking back longingly to the times before these innovations. They were partly affected by the tales brought back by the discoverers of the new lands in the West and their native occupants.

Thomas More in his "Utopia", written in 1516, criticised the economic conditions of his time and argued that crime was the product of social conditions, the result of poverty. He asks what could men do who had been driven off the land and were unable to find jobs. They must either starve or become thieves. Here is his point of view@referring to peasants who had been driven off the land as the result of land enclosures:

"By one means therefore or by other either by hook or crook they must needs depart away, poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers, with their young babes, and their whole household small in substance and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale; yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it for a thing of nought. And when they have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they do but steal and then justly partly be hanged or else go about begging. Yet then they be cast into prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not, whom no man will set to work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto. For one shepherd or herdman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle, to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite."

Campanella in his "City of the Sun", 1619, attributes social changes to the stars. He describes the relation of the geographical environment to social changes. Later Buckle's and Jevon's sun spot theory was somewhat similar.

In 1656 Harrington, in his "Oceana" proclaimed the opinion that the distribution of property determines the nature of government, and that the political philosopher is therefore concerned with the distribution of property: Gooch, in his "History of Democratic Ideas of the Seventeenth Century" says of Harrington: "Alone of all his contemporaries, Harrington understood that the causes of the great upheaval (the Revolution of 1640) which had been witnessed needed to be sought in the underlying social and economic transformation."

In the turmoil before the French Revolution a number of French writers expressed views on the effect of social conditions upon conduct. Amongst these were Morelly, Turgot, Mably, Meslier, Bamave, and d'Holbach.

Jean Meslier in his "Testament of Jean Meslier", was opposed to property and believed in the common control of the wealth of society. He argued that among the evils which oppressed mankind and called for reform the worst is private property. Property means inequality, inequality leads to injustice and oppression.

The rich are respected and honoured, while the poor must toil in neglect. Property is a cause of idleness; the idle rich class finds its complement in an idle poor class. This latter class is made up of the unemployed, who, because of the present system, have nothing to do and are hence in poverty. Cupidity and its attendants, ambition and greed, are the evils in a society based upon property. Property does not unite people; but through jealousy tends to break up social harmony, and hence destroys social unity. Fraud, deception, theft and murder find their cause in property. Society might be happy were goods made common and equality secured. The basis of equality is equality of economic condition.

Morelly in his "Code de la Nature", 1755, wrote:

"From the sceptre to the shepherd's crook, from the tiara to the meanest monk's frock, if one asks who govern men, the answer is simple; personal interest or interest of others which vanity makes one adopt

and which is always dependent on the first, but from where do these monsters get power? From property."

He denied the existence of innate ideas, as also did Helvetius who wrote "The ideas supposed to be innate are those that are familiar to and as it were incorporated with us; they are the effect of education, example, and habit." d'Holbach in his "Social System" stated:

"If wealth is the mother of vices, poverty is the mother of crimes. When a state is badly governed and wealth is too unequally divided, so that millions of men lack the necessaries of life, while a small number of citizens are surfeited with luxuries, there we see a great number of criminals, whose number punishments do not diminish. If a government punishes the unfortunate it leaves undisturbed the vices that are leading the state to ruin; it erects gibbets for the poor, whereas by bringing men to poverty it has itself made thieves, assassins, and criminals of every kind; it punishes crime, while it continually invites men to commit crime."

Turgot, one of the leading thinkers of his time, wrote the following in his "Reflections" in 1766:

"The mere workman, who has only his arms and his industry, has nothing except in so far as he succeeds in selling his toil to others. He sells it more or less dear; but this price, more or less high as it may be, does not depend upon himself alone; it results from the agreement which he makes with him who pays his labour.

The latter pays 'him as little as he can; as he has the choice among a good number of workmen, he prefers the one who works cheapest. The workmen are therefore obliged to lower the price, in competition with one another. In any kind of work it cannot fail to happen, and as a matter of fact it does happen, that the wages of the workman are limited to what is necessary to procure him his subsistence."

This is not a bad expression of the class struggle. Turgot, unlike the writers from whom we have already quoted, was not a builder of Utopias; he was a physiocrat Who considered that all wealth came from the soil. They ignored history in the sense that there were fundamental changes, and believed that the true society had only to be discovered to be put into operation.

The last of the pre-French Revolution writers we quote is Bamave. He was active in the revolution, became an opponent of Robespierre and supporter of the bourgeoisie. He understood the rise of classes and also, to some extent, the part which economic changes play in history. In his "Introduction to the French Revolution" he wrote:

"It is the nature of things, in the social period which people have reached, the territory they inhabit, their wealth, their needs, their usages, their attitudes, which determine the distribution of power."

He held that with the growth of property inequalities developed which became the basis for social classes and class distinctions. This is how he put it:

"As, before the period when commerce existed, the aristocracy is, by the nature of things, in possession of power, it is they then who make the laws, who create the prejudices and direct the habits of the people: they will be able, through the power of institutions, to counter balance for a long time the influence of natural causes." [Events, or normal developments or normal circumstances].

Even Napoleon, one of the "Great Men", had a glimmering of the truth when he made this statement:

"Mohammed's case was like mine. I found all the elements ready at hand to found an empire. Europe was weary of anarchy, they wanted to make an end of it. If I had not come probably someone else would have done like me . . . I repeat, a man is only a man. His power is nothing if circumstances and public sentiment do not favour him."

During the Cromwellian period in England Geirard Winstanley, one of the "Diggers", wrote a number of articles criticising buying and selling and private property. He advocated common ownership of land and set out in detail his Utopia. In 1649 he wrote 'The True Levellers' Standard Advanced". The following is an extract from it:

"And if the earth be not peculiar to any one branch or branches of mankind, but the inheritance of all, then is it free and common for all to work together, and eat together. And truly, you counsellors and powers of the earth, know this, that wheresoever there is a people, thus united by common community of livelihood into oneness, it will become the strongest land in the world; for then they will be as one

man to defend their inheritance, and salvation (which is liberty and peace) is the walls and bulwarks of that land or city.

"Whereas on the other side, pleading for property and single interest divides the people of the land and the whole world into parties, and is the cause of all wars and bloodshed, and contention everywhere."

Winstanley, like Ba'beuf in the French Revolution, and Trotsky in the Russian Revolution, argued that the revolution had got upon the wrong track and was bringing back the evils that the revolution was supposed to remove. He was a cloth merchant ruined by the civil war.

Writers on the American revolt like Madison and Webster, and on the French Revolution like Guizot and Mignet, also scouted around the materialist conception.

Madison, a member of the convention which framed the American Constitution wrote:

"From the influence of different degrees and kinds of property on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors ensues a diffusion of society into different interests and parties."

Daniel Webster, speaking in 1820, said:

"It is just that the weight of each person in the common councils should 'bear a relation and proportion to his interest.'" (He was speaking of property interest).

"The English revolution of 1688 was a revolution in favour of property, as well as of other rights. It was brought about by men of property for their own security. Our own immortal revolution was undertaken, not to rihake property, but to protect it."

The above quotations will give some idea of the views prevailing before Marx made his investigations into the question and placed it on a sound basis.

Since Marx's day historians are more and more using his theory to explain the background of events in past history. Books like, to mention a few, Davis: "Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome"; Marti: "Economic Causes of the Reformation in England"; Wibley: "Political Parties in Athens"; Pirenne: "Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe"; Ferrero: "Greatness and Decline of Rome"; Calhoun: "The Business Life of Ancient Athens"; Chenery: "Industry and Human Welfare"; Murdoch: "Economics as the Basis of Living Ethics"; and others, including historical studies of different periods published by Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Columbia universities.

In an essay in "The Science of Social Development" F. A. Broke, a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Society, put the position very clearly when he wrote:

"As do all human beings, like every other living creature, prove by their daily conduct that the problem of obtaining their food is the most important matter in life, anything that goes to the roots of this fundamental question and modifies it will inevitably modify every other aspect and department of human life - political, ethical, religious, etc. The clue to the social order of any particular period is to be found in the means by which people obtain their livelihood, the tools they use, and the way in which these tools are owned and controlled' ".

A statement in the Introduction to "Cultural Patterns and Technical Change", edited by Margaret Mead, also has a bearing on our subject:

"Technical change is also as old as civilisations and since time immemorial the ways of life of whole peoples have been transformed by the introduction of new tools and new technical procedures, as inventions like the plough, the domestication of animals, writing, the use of steam, the factory assembly line, and the internal combustion engine, have been diffused from one country to another. Relationships of relative dominance between two peoples, population balances, dynasties, and whole religious systems have been upset by some change in technology just as the inventions which underlie technological change have themselves arisen from changing conceptions of nature and of man."

## **Appendix II – Extracts from Marx and Engels on the Materialist Conception of History.**

(a) In the introduction to the "Critique of Political Economy" Marx summarised his views as follows:

"In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression of the same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic - in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore, mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. In broad outlines we can designate the asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production - antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from conditions surrounding the life of individuals in society; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation constitutes, therefore the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society."

In his preface to Volume I of "Capital" Marx added the following to the above statement:

"One nation can and should learn from others. And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement - and it is the ultimate aim of this work to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society - it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth pangs."

In the second paragraph of the "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" he made another addition:

"Man makes his own history, but does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living."

Just one or two notes relating to the above:

It will be noticed that the method of production determines the *general* character, not the character of *each individual*. That the relations turn into fetters - like feudal land holding, the closed guilds, and the objections to investment for profit which fettered the development of capitalism. Distinction must be made between the transformation of the conditions of production and the ideological forms under which the fight was carried on. The religious wars towards the end of the Middle Ages were the

ideological reflection of the growth of capitalism. One nation can learn from others. This is happening in Africa and is the source of much turmoil. Also the Aborigines of Australia have jumped right into capitalism owing to the European colonisation. Margaret Mead, in "New Lives for Old", relates that she witnessed amongst the Manus of Polynesia a people who had travelled from the stone age to modern culture in the space of twenty-five years. This happened because of the presence of an American Army on the island during the last war.

In his *Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx made reference to the development of all the productive forces:

"In order for the oppressed class to be emancipated it is necessary that the productive powers already acquired and the existing social relations should no longer 'be able to exist side by side. Of all the instruments of production the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself. The organisation of the revolutionary elements as a class supposes the existence of all the productive forces which can be engendered in the bosom of the old society."

The above statements by Marx should make his attitude on the subject quite clear, though it has not prevented exaggerations and misinterpretations.

(b) In reply to a letter from a young student Engels made the following statement:

"According to the materialist conception of history, the factor which is *in the last instance* decisive in history is the production and reproduction of actual life. More than this neither Marx nor myself ever claimed. If now someone has distorted the meaning in such a way that the economic factor is the only decisive one, this man has changed the above pro-position into an abstract, absurd phrase which says nothing. The economic situation is the base, but the different parts of the structure - the political forms of the class struggle and its results, the constitutions established by the victorious class after the battle is won, forms of law and even the reflections of all these real struggles in the brains of the participants, political theories, juridical, philosophical, religious opinions, and their further development into dogmatic systems @ all this exercises also its influence on the development of the historical struggles and in cases determines their form."

(c) In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (p.190, Kerr ed.), Marx indicated the changed form of social development when class divided society gives place to "an association which will exclude classes and their antagonisms":

"It is only in an order of things in which there will be no longer classes or class antagonism that *social evolutions* will cease to be *political revolutions*."