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Antonio Gramsci -The Man And His Thoughts

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Like the rest of the world communist movement, the CPI(M) too expressed its concern at the retreat from Socialism in USSR and in the East European countries. This however is not a permanent defeat of Marxism-Leninism, as alleged by the anti-communists.

The Fourteenth Congress of our Party came to the conclusion that the retreat from Socialism in the European countries is the result of certain deviations and distortions that occurred in the practice of Marxism-Leninism. It is therefore necessary to make a deep study of the reasons why the retreat from Socialism took place in the Soviet Union and in Eastern, Europe, and to devise ways and means to avoid the distortions in future.

These conclusions were confirmed by the Fifteenth Congress of the Party which asked the PB and the Central committee to undertake a deep study. That work has obviously to continue.

IMPORTANCE OF GRAMSCI'S THOUGHTS

Among the materials that will help this process of deeper study into the causes of the retreat from Socialism in the European countries, a place of honour will be occupied by the Selections from the Prison Note-books written by Antonio Gramsci in his last year made available in English translation. Gramsci had had to spend over a decade in jail from the time of his arrest in 1926 down to his death in 1937. He joined his notes down on various aspects of Marxist theory and its application in practice. The whole volume will help us to understand Marxism-Leninism as interpreted and applied by one of the outstanding leaders of the Communist Party of Italy-also of the Communist International. Those who study the volume will understand that the author has both applied Marxist-Leninism to the concrete conditions of his own country (Italy) as well as further enriched the theory on the basis of his own study of national and

international developments.

LIFE'S TRAVAILS

Antonio's life in his childhood was tragic in several respects. He had a mal-formation of the spine. The doctors attempted to cure him by giving him suspended for long periods from the beam of the ceiling. When he grew up, he became a hunchback and was hardly five feet tall. He also suffered from internal disorders which brought him close to death as a small child. These were to recur; and his life was accompanied by severe nervous complications, which ultimately led to his death at he age of 46.

Added to these problems of health, Gramsci's family had to suffer from the consequences of suspension first and then arrest of Gramsci's father who was a Government official. Whether Gramsci's father was guilty of the charges on which he was suspended and hailed is not important. What is important is that Gramsci's education suffered. At the end of his elementary schooling, he had to go out to work, since none of his brothers was earning. It was only when his father was released that he was able to return to school.

In the school and in the higher educational institutions, Gramsci made his mark as a very intelligent student. He had a small financial scholarship but that was insufficient and so his physical condition deteriorated.

It is worth mentioning that one of Gramsci's future colleagues and comrade, Palmior Togliatti, was his school friend. Friendship between the two developed subsequently into comradeship in political work.

TOGETHER WITH TOGLIATTI

Gramsci began his political activity as a member of the Italian Socialist Party led by right-wing socialist.

The influence of the latter on the first generation of Marxist theoreticians in Italy was very much there in Gramsci's intellectual makeup. He however rapidly overcame it and became one of the active leftist in the Socialist Party. He was a voracious reader of Marxist classics and also a prolific write in the party journals. Some of the articles he wrote in those days marked him our as a future

communist leader.

Although led by the right-wing leaders, the Italian Socialist Party as a whole joined the communist International. There were however bitter fights between the communists a "leftist" trend was dominant, while a rightist trend was also prevalent Gramsci and some of his other comrades like Togliatti joined to carry a simultaneously struggles against the Left and right trends which, as Lenin pointed out were both serious Party as well as among the Communist in the Socialist Party that shaped the Marxist personality in Gramsci and of his comrades like Togliatti.

At the time of formation of the Communist Party of Italy and of the Communist International, the new evil force of Fascism was making rapid strides. Italy came under fascist rule and in Germany the Nazis were rapidly growing. Naturally, therefore, intense discussions took place in the communist Party of Italy against the background of which the new force of fascism was growing. The class essence of fascism and the ways and means of fighting it was under serious debate.

Together with Togliatti, Gramsci adopted the correct position: they pointed out that the emergence of fascism reflected the intensification of capitalist crisis. New ways and means were being adopted by the bourgeoisie to solve its crisis at the expense of the working class and the democratic movement. Fascism should therefore be combated by forging a broad alliance of democratic forces. The communist should make it a point to bring about this anti fascist unity.

THE POLITICAL LINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL

These thought being evolved in the Communist Party of Italy were subsequently refined in the classical report adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935. The contribution made by the Gramsci-Togliatti duo in the evolution of this political line is great. Gramsci, at that time, was of course in jail and therefore could not personally participate in the deliberations of the World congress. Togliatti however was not only present but made a co-report on the character of the new War into which fascism was pushing the world. He prophetically declared that, whatever the way in which the new war would break out, it would subsequently develop into an anti-Soviet War-a forecast which actually came true when the Second World War, which had its beginning in the conflict

of two imperialist groups of powers subsequently turned into an anti-Soviet War.

ARREST AND AFTER

In the meanwhile Gramsci was arrested. His immunity as a member of the Italian Parliament had been revoked. The Party had suggested, and made all preparation to take him out of the country, in order to save him from arrest. He however rejected the proposal, saying that a captain of a sinking ship should never leave if unless and until the last passenger has been saved. He was naturally arrested and spent more than a decade in prison.

Conditions in the prison were extremely harsh. His health deteriorated. But he stood his ground using the opportunity of prison life to start taking down notes on the Marxist theory and its applications to Italy and throughout the world. He however had to do without the Marxist Classics which were not permitted in jail. However the voracious reading that had made earlier and the determination with which he fought back the repressive regime made it possible for him to make several thousands of pages of notes which together constitute a new Marxist classic. Meticulously written as the notes were, they were sent outside by his sister-in-law, his wife being herself ill and hospitalised. Such is the background against which the prison note-books came to be written.

As was noted earlier, it is not the Prison Note-Books in full but selections from them that were subsequently published, first in Italian and then in other languages including English. The editors have compiled them into three major parts- (1) Problems of History and Culture, (2) Notes on Politics and (3) Philosophy of Praxis respectively. The first two of these contained 3 sections each, while the last is divided into two sections.

The whole collection brings out the grandeur of the profound theoretical understanding of one of the greatest thinkers produced by the international Marxist movement.

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE WORKING CLASS

The first section in the Problems of History and Culture is titled The intellectuals. It brings out the intimate relation between the revolutionary working class movement and progressive intellectuals.

The latter itself is divided into two: democratic intellectuals thrown up by other classes and the intellectuals who have grown within the revolutionary working class movement. The two together constitute the revolutionary working class movement.

As Engels had observed-an observation later quoted by Lenin- the working class in discharging its historic task of throwing the bourgeoisie out of power has to fight on three fronts- economic, political and theoretical. Without a combination of the three, the working class cannot succeed in the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie from power.

Gramsci makes it perfectly clear that intellectuals are not a separate class. They are part of either the ruling classes or the working people led by the working class. The unity and struggle between the two groups of intellectuals – bourgeois – landlord and worker- peasant intellectual- is the essence of the Marxist approach to the problem of the intellectuals and their role in the struggle for democracy and socialism.

Gramsci however points out the difference between urban and rural intellectuals. In each of them, of course, there are the two class trends. The unity and solidarity of the urban intellectuals and the urban toiling classes led by the industrial working class, together with the rural toilers led by the rural proletarians – such is the essence of the strategy of the revolution. It is from these approaches that the Marxist-Leninism perspective of workers peasant unity in which all sections of (urban and rural) toiling people led by the working class has been evolved.

ON EDUCATION

Having made this preliminary point clear, Gramsci proceeds to discuss the problem of education which obviously is an integral part of developing intellectuals from the proletarian, semi proletarian and all other classes and sections of the people. So long as society in a particular country is dominated by the ruling classes, education will naturally be organised to develop such intellectuals as serve the cause of the ruling classes. It should however be possible for the proletarian and other radical democratic forces to so plan education as to help the crystallisation of democratic as well as proletarian intellectuals.

It is with this in mind that Gramsci makes a number of suggestions for organising the education system.

Firstly, the responsibility for organising education should be taken by the State because the intellectuals that are created are to serve society as a whole.

Secondly, the content of education should be a combination of imparting the elements of natural and social sciences as well as training the pupils for some occupation in life. He, in fact, elaborates the theory formulated by Marx according to whom education should broaden the area of scientific, artistic and literary knowledge and, at the same time, train the pupil for an occupation which he can take after completing his education.

Thirdly, Gramsci discusses the problem of pedagogy. The study of Greek and Latin with their grammar is an important aspect of education, though it involves much of learning by rote. As a pupil goes from lower to higher grades however learning by rote should be replaced by more self study. The learning by rote will help the lower standard pupil to be disciplined, while the self study late would make them self taught. Gramsci opposes the method of learning by rote in higher standards of the schools and in higher educational institutions, as it prevents the students from developing their own personality.

RELEVANCE TO INDIA

These are the principles which, it can be seen, are very much relevant for us in India. For, the pre-dominant place is given here to learning by rote prevents the student particularly in the higher standards of schools and in the higher educational institutions from undertaking their own self-study. One is reminded, in this connection, of a famous dictum of Indian pedagogy, "get one fourth of your knowledge from the teacher, one-fourth from your school fellow, one fourth through self-study and the rest from experience in the post education years." This principles has been consistently violated in our country both when it was being lorded over by British rulers as well as since independence.

The demand for educational reforms in our country should therefore include serious re-thinking on pedagogic principles as well as the state taking responsibility for running all educational institutions- from the primary school to the post-graduate educational institutions. For, like all other aspects of social life, education too is being increasingly privatised and made out of reach for the pupils and students from the poorer sections of society. Further more, the

boys and girls and trained in our schools and colleges are made unfit for any useful vocation in life, thrown into the array of the “educated unemployed.”

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The piece entitled Notes on Italian History included in the Selections from Gramsci’s Prison Note-Books, has been included in the sections Problems of History and Culture. Actually however, it deal with political problems, along with the three pieces included in the section “Notes on Politics”. The “Notes on Italian History” throw a flood of light on the Marxist understanding of political development in the world as a whole and in Italy in particular.

Based as these notes are on the theoretical concepts elaborated by Marx, Engels and Lenin, they not only apply those concepts in the concrete conditions of the post-Lenin World, Italy in particular, but they further enrich our understanding of the political theory and practice of Marxism.

The pieces mentioned above gives clarity on five major points which are of great significance of the Marxist-Leninist throughout world today. It is therefore proposed below to explain these five concepts which, as noted above, further enrich the theory and practice of Marxist science.

1. Personal Despotism and Class Dictatorship

The piece under the title Notes on Italian History discusses the question of how personal despotism emerged in the ancient and modern epochs of human history. Ceasarism and Bonapartism are two examples of personal despotism in the two respective epochs of human history.

Making an anlysis of the historical background against which these two despotism arose, Gramsci comes to the conclusion that the emergence of these personal despotism is the result of socio-political conflicts. Different socio-political forces fighting one another are unable to resolve their contradictions and establish social peace. None of the fighting social forces can inflict a decisive defeat any of its opponents, leading to a dead-lock in the mutual relations among them.

A charismatic personality then comes on the scene and establishes his personal despotism, such as Julius Ceasar in ancient history, Napoleon I and III in modern history. The latter

two came on the scene because of the irresolvable socio- political conflict, just as Ceasar did in ancient history.

Gramsci adds that there are personal despotism which help the cause of progress. Opposed to them are others, which help the reactionary forces. A distinction should therefore be made between the despotism that helps progress and that which helps reaction. It is not as if every form of despotism is equally bad.

Julius Ceasar's in the ancient world and Napoleon-1 in the modern world were progressive since they helped the cause of progress. On the other hand, Napoleon-III in France and Bismark in Germany helped the cause of reaction in modern Europe. Democratic and proletarian forces should therefore make distinction between the two types of personal despotism.

Gramsci makes it clear that neither Italian fascism led by Mussolini nor the Nazi regime led by Adolf Hitler in Germany was a case of personal despotism. Together with the Spanish and other Western European fascist regimes, Italian fascism and the German Nazi regime were the class dictatorships of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie. To quote Gramsci from the concluding para of his Notes on Italian History:

"There is a passive revolution involved in the fact that – through the legislative intervention of the State and by means of the Corporate organisations-relatively far reaching modifications are being introduced into the country's economic structure in order words, that socialisation and co-operation in the sphere of production are being increased, without however touching (or at least nothing beyond regulation and control of) individual and group appropriation of profit.

In the concrete framework in Italian social relations, this could be the only solution whereby to develop the productive forces of industry under the direction of traditional ruling classes in competition with more advance in industrial under the direction of traditional ruling classes in competition with more advance in industrial formations of countries which monopolise raw materials and have accumulated massive capital gains."

It can be seen that this was the understanding of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International which characterised fascism as the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie. It was on that basis that the world revolutionary movement under the leadership of the

Communist International launched an all sided attack on world fascism, crushed Italian fascism and German Nazi rule. This was a turning point in the history of the world working class and the world democratic movement, but Gramsci did not live to see it.

2. Proletarian Dictatorship

As opposed to this open terrorist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (world fascism) is the Communist leadership of anti-fascist movement which, as is known, was committed to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Originally worked out by Marx and Engels, the concept of proletarian dictatorship had been further developed and concretely applied by Lenin in the Soviet Union. Gramsci in his political notes and the world communist movement in its various documents combatted the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie by the broad alliance of the democratic and national revolutionary movements headed by the working class on the basis of worker- peasant alliance.

In fact, even before fascism had developed into a big international force, Lenin based his concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat on the broadest application of democracy for the working people, while ruthless repression is used against the representatives of the ruling classes. That was why, after successfully experimenting with the earlier of War Communism, Lenin evolved the New Economic Policy which was based on the solid alliance of the proletarian state with the peasant masses. Even in the matter of building socialism, Lenin made it clear that background countries like the Soviet Union would have to take the help of the domestic and foreign monopoly capitalists to develop the forces of production under the supervision of the proletarian state. The Soviet Union, however, had to industrialise under conditions of capitalist encirclement, isolation, intervention and extreme class hostility. Lenin, however, declared that the future of Socialism depends on whether existing socialism establishes its superiority over capitalism in point of economic production.

The pronouncement made by Lenin in his last months on the essence of the New Economic Policy is a treasure house of Marxism on which Gramsci depends very much. His political notes in fact are a further enrichment of the Leninist ideas elaborated in the speeches, articles, notes etc, written by Lenin in his last days. It goes to the credit of Gramsci that he stood by these Leninist concepts and further developed them in the light of the post-

Lenin years.

It may be noted in this context that another great Marxist-Leninist in the post-Leninist in the post-Lenin epoch, Mao Ze Dong, enriched the concept of proletarian dictatorship, with his theory of People's Democratic Dictatorship concretely applying the Leninist concept to the specific conditions of China. Here again, as in Lenin, it is a happy combination of democracy for the common people with dictatorship over the defeated ruling classes.

3. The Revolutionary Party of the Working Class

Important in this connection is Gramsci's piece on the "Modern Prince". Basing himself on the well known Italian political scientist Machiavelli, whose classical work on the Prince is a directive on how State Policy is to be evolved and implemented, the "Modern Prince" is for Gramsci is another term for the revolutionary party of the working class. The piece on the Modern Prince is a treasure house of the Marxist-Leninist concept of political science. As distinct from Machiavelli's Prince, the ideal good ruler, Gramsci raises the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class to the level of national ruler. Founded as the revolutionary party of the working class on such Leninist principles as a absolute fidelity to the working class and its allies among the working people; education of the working people in the basic concepts of natural and social science; the organisational principle of democratic centralism which combines the broadest inner-party democracy and the strict observance of discipline etc., the revolutionary party of the working class is eminently fitted to lead the struggle against world fascism, for modern democracy, against colonialism and so on.

Only such a party, leading such revolutionary forces can defeat World Fascism and colonialism (which props up fascism) and liberate the working people in the developed and under-developed countries of the world.

This was the grand idea with which Lenin had broadened the Marx-Engels call on the "Workers of the World" to unite by adding the "oppressed peoples of the world". The term "Workers of the World" who were to be united were in the First and Second International mostly confined to the developed capitalist countries of Europe. The Third Communist International led by Lenin, on the other hand, was a genuine International including revolutionary parties al over the world. This is the "Modern Prince" with whom Gramsci wanted to replace⁴ Machiavelli's

Prince”.

4. Civil Society and the State

Still another contribution made to Marxism-Leninism by Gramsci was the further development and refinement of the concept concerning Civil Society on the one hand and the political society (State) on the other. Although distinct from each other, the two are inter-related. The class that dominates and exercise power and unchallenged control over the state should also exercise hegemony over Civil Society. Even the fascist states of Mussolini and Hitler were based partly on the support which they evoked among the Italian and German peoples with their grievances against the victorious powers that emerged out of the First World War.

The leaders of the Communist International had pointed out that the state power exercised by the fascist forces is not based purely on naked force but also on the capacity of the fascist rulers to sway the masses to their side.

The working class too, Gramsci pointed out, has to establish its hegemony over Civil Society before being able to exercise state power. Here lies the importance of the organised activity of the political party of the working class as well as the fighting organisations of all sections of the working people. For, the sympathy and support of all sections of democratic public opinion is the social basis on which the “Modern Prince” exercise hegemony in Civil Society and State power. Without this, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie neither in its parliamentary democratic nor fascist form can be challenged.

This of course is not a new contribution of Gramsci. Credit however goes to him that he further enriched the basic principles originally laid down by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

5. Americanism and Fordism

Gramsci was also farsighted to note the changes that were taking place in the structure and functioning of modern capitalism. The piece entitled “Americanism and Fordism” and included in the political sections of the Prison Note Books points out the ‘new face’ given to capitalism in America. This is a method of the bourgeoisie exercising its hegemony over Civil Society in capitalist countries.

Fascism of the Italian, German and other types of world monopoly

capital was one method of solving the economic and political crisis of world capitalism in the 1920s and 1930s. Supplementing it was the method of "Americanism and Fordism" which could wean a section of the working people away from Communism.

Initiated after more than a decade of the existence of the Soviet Union the way in which President Roosevelt initiated his New Deal and measures taken by Henry Ford and other monopoly capitalists in America would create illusions not only in the United State, but in the whole capitalist world that capitalism is being renovated and is offering an alternative to Socialism.

The significance of this be understood only when one notes that, almost 80 years after the October Revolution in Russia no developed capitalist country has so far had its proletarian revolution. On the other hand, the USSR, the first socialist country that followed it have made a retreat from socialism, embracing capitalism in economy and bourgeois parliamentary democracy in politics. It should be further noted that this blow against existing Socialism was not struck in the battle of arms. In that battle, of course, Socialism came out victorious as was seen in the defeat of Hitler's Germany and US-USSR parity in nuclear arms. The blow against Socialism in the USSR and in Eastern Europe was struck in terms of what Lenin had visualised: the historic battle between world capitalism and world socialism on the point of economic production

It was not the nuclear arms of the United States, but the new scientific and technological revolution that showed, though temporarily, that World Capitalism was superior to World Socialism. The Leninist perception of the co-existence and competition of the capitalist and socialist world was thus completely vindicated. It goes to the credit of Anronio Gramsci that he was able to foresee this in his political notes on "Americanism and Fordism".

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

The last part of Gramsci's Prison Note Books deals with the problems of Philosophy. It is divided into two sections titled "Study of Philosophy" and "Principle of Marxism" respectively. The whole part has the title "Philosophy of Praxis".

The question naturally arises why Gramsci should have called Marxist Philosophy the "Philosophy of Praxis". Was it done to get

around the Jail Censor who would not approve of the term "Marxism? If the answer is 'yes', he would not have titled the Second section in this part "Problems of Marxism". Again, in the first part itself, there are guidelines on how to study the writings of Marx and Engels. Clearly therefore, the use of the term Philosophy of Praxis is for consideration other than getting around the Jail Censor. What then is the reason?

The obvious answer is that, as Marx wrote in his thesis on Feuerbach, "Philosophers have in various ways interpreted the world; the point is to change it."

Together with the content of all other writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, this makes it clear that Marxist Philosophy is intimately connected with praxis (practice). Seeing in the working people the creation of everything grand in human society, the founders of Marxism saw in the practice of the working class the basis for enunciating their theoretical concept.

As Mao Ze Dong later wrote in his celebrated work "On Practice", the Marxists always have a continuing process of learning from the practice of the working people, refining them to theoretical concepts, taking these concepts again to the people leading them in revolutionary action, once again taking the experience of the people's practice etc. this is an unending process which substantiated the Marx-Engels concept of "the unity of theory and practice", each of them of course having its separate existence but interacting on each other.

Gramsci did certainly have this in mind when he used the term Philosophy of Praxis to designate Marxism. Marxist philosophy is not a matter of ivory "high" thoughts of "scholars" who "stand above the common people." For Marxists, on the other hand, philosophy arises out of the common peoples' daily struggles. Gramsci wanted to draw attention to this aspect of the revolutionary Marxist philosophy.

If you go into the content of the first part of the Philosophical Notes, it will be seen that in the "Study of Philosophy"-the title of the first part-Gramsci suggests how the works of Marx Engels have to be studied. It is not as if, with a view of getting around the censor, Gramsci avoids using the term Marxism. As a matter of fact, we have seen that the second section of the philosophical part of the Prison Note Books explicitly discusses "The Problems of Marxism."

What then are the problems of Marxism? It is a question of mastering the principles of Dialectics and Materialism in relation to the ever-changing human society. That is why Dialectical and Historical Materialism studies the problems of contradictions not only in nature but in human society and in the development of human thinking. Historical Materialism is, in other words the application of Dialectics and Materialism to the problems of social development and the development of human thinking.

CRITIQUE OF BUKHARIN'S BOOK

It is from this angle that, in the second section of the Philosophic part of his Prison Note Books, Gramsci enters into polemics against the celebrated Marxist Intellectual Bukharin. Gramsci refers in this context to two observations on Bukharin that Lenin made in his letter to the Central Committee: firstly, he is a great theoretician and the 'darling of the party'; secondly, he has no understanding of dialectics. It is this latter that Gramsci elaborates in his critique of Bukharin's work on Historical Materialism.

In polemising against Bukharin, Gramsci objects to the subtitle of Bukharin's work "An attempt at Popular Sociology". Historical Materialism says Gramsci is not Sociology but Philosophy. Sociology deals with the limited subject of social life and its history. Philosophy, on the other hand, deals with all aspects of man and the nature surrounding him. Furthermore, the nature that surrounds man, the society in which he lives and works, the way of thinking of man—all this is part of a never ending process of development from lower to higher forms. Such is the essence of the philosophy of Dialectical and Historical Materialism.

One characteristic feature of all the 3 aspects of material life—the nature around man, man living in society and the thinking of man—is that all the three are in the process of constant change and flux which, in its turn, is based on the contradictory forces operating in nature, the individual man, the collective man and the world of thinking. All these are everchanging. The existence of contradictory forces in every phenomenon in the world, the ever continuing unity and struggle of opposites in every phenomenon the fact that progress—such in sum total is the essence of Dialectics (of which, Lenin noted, Bukharin had a poor understanding); the application of this philosophical concept to

human society and thinking is not therefore a question of Sociology but of Philosophy.

The non-understanding of this essential of Dialectical and Historical materialism lands Bukharin into a metaphysical and mechanical approach to the problems of even Sociology. The theoretical basis of the critique of Bukharin's book was contained in Lenin's observation that Bukharin had a poor understanding of dialectics. Gramsci developed this idea through a detailed critique of Bukharin's book.

ROOT OF DISTORTIONS IN THE POST-LENIN SOVIET SOCIETY

Looking back now-six decades after Gramsci made a critique of Bukharin's book one can see that the poor understanding of Dialectics was not confined to Bukharin alone. His critics in the Soviet Party were equally guilty of the mistake of Bukharin noted by Lenin first and elaborately explained by Gramsci. To this may probably be traced the distortions that crept into the practical working of socialist construction in the USSR.

It should, at this stage, be noted that, as opposed to both Bukharin and his opponents in the Soviet Party, Lenin had a Dialectical and Historical understanding of the process taking place in the Soviet Union and in the world. The Great October Socialist Revolution started the process of socialist construction in the single country that broke off from capitalism-and that too a country backward in every respect. The way in which Lenin dealt with this basic contradiction shows his profound familiarity with the theory of Dialectics and its practice in understanding the post-October Revolution world.

Lenin never had the illusion that the success of the October Revolution and the beginning of socialist construction in the USSR had resolved the world-wide contradictions between capitalism and socialism. On the other hand, the contradictions had grown and were assuming new forms. Lenin as the leader of the emerging Socialist Society had a clear conception that, for its very existence-not to speak of helping the process of world revolution-the Soviet Union had to fight a many-sided battle.

Having first experimented with War Communism in the first stage of socialist construction in Soviet Russia and succeeded in it, he came up with the idea of the New Economy policy. This, he noted

will have its impact on the world revolution if the Soviet state succeeds in overtaking the capitalist world in economic production. For this, he added, it was necessary to preserve the worker-peasant alliance, protect the multi-national unity of the Soviet State, unify the ruling Communist Party and take the help of the such internal and foreign capitalists as are prepared to help the process of socialist construction under the leaderships of the working class.

As opposed to this dynamic conception of the relation between the socialist revolution in Russia and the process of socialist transformation in the world was the mechanical concept of the Socialist Soviet Union being an already established military and political power in perpetual confrontation with the capitalist world surrounding Socialist Russia. It appeared to the post-Lenin leadership almost as if contradictions in Russia and Soviet society had been finally resolved, as if it was a question only of going from Socialism to Communism in the USSR (the pronouncements of Khrushchev and Brezhnev) not only completing socialist construction but going forward to Communism in a single country. This was a total under-estimation of the power of world capitalism to shape, to whatever limited extent even the developments in the Soviet Union.

It should be noted in this connection that the "collapse of the soviet Union" was not the result of the military might of the United States led world capitalism. On the other hand in the titanic military conflict between the Soviet-led socialist camp and the US-led capitalist camp, world capitalism could not defeat world socialism. It was the internal weakness of the Soviet Union and its socialist construction that finally led to the "collapse of the USSR."

Why did this happen? Because, we can now see, Lenin's successor departed from the broad principles enunciated by Lenin-catching up with overtaking the capitalist world in point of economic construction; failure to use the force of internal and foreign capitalism to build a powerful economy which will enable the socialist nation to catch up with and overtake the capitalist world; distortions in the approach to the peasantry and to the question of nationalities; and above all, violations of Socialist Democracy in the country and internal democracy within the Communist Party. It was these departures from the Leninist perspective and policies that created an ever-widening gulf between the Soviet people and the Soviet leadership-the soil on which the Reagans, the Bushes and the Clintons took full of advantage.

However, instead of correcting these mistakes, a section of the Soviet leadership (from Khrushchev to Gorbachev) opted for market economy and bourgeois democracy. Hence the tragedy of the 1980s and 1990s.

GRAMSCI'S CONTRIBUTIONS

It is from this point of view that Gramsci's Prison Note-Books throw a flood light on the world situation after the victorious end of the anti-fascist war. Although he did not live to see the changes that took place in the later half of the 30s and the succeeding decades, he was prophetic:

- a) In uttering a note of warning about the danger of the bureaucratic organisation of the when the first disciplinary actions were taken against the then opposition in the Soviet Party and in the Communist International;
- b) In laying down the principle that the working class can not dominate the state unless it is able to establish its hegemony over the Civil Society.
- c) In the importance that Gramsci attached to new experiments being carried on in the United States (examined in detail in his Political Notes on "Americanism and Fordism") Here again, Gramsci was prophetic in seeing that world capitalism resorted to the method of open terroristic dictatorship (Fascism) and of corrupting the working class (Americanism and Fordism). The leadership of Soviet Union and the world Communist movement could not see the impact which the American experiment was having on the peoples of (developed and developing) capitalist countries.

In summing up this discussion, it may be noted an overestimation of the military-diplomatic factor and under-estimation of the ideological any political factors was the essence of the departures from the Leninist line of which his successors may be considered guilty of.