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SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

THERE ARE CERTAIN questions which are invariably raised when we, communists, speak of building socialism. Some of them are very crude, and they arise from the constant and vicious anti-communist propaganda carried on by the press, radio, television, etc. dominated by the money barons in all capitalist countries. However, we can pose them as they are usually formulated. That does not harm us.

Until a quarter of a century ago it used to be necessary for us to deal painstakingly even with such stupidities as the 'nationalisation of women under communism', 'the abolition of the family', 'the abolition of religion,' and so on.

Such propaganda no longer cuts any ice. Crores of people in capitalist world now know for a fact that marriage and family life are far more stable and lasting in the socialist countries than the holy and god-fearing capitalist world.

The equality of the sexes, not on paper, but in fact, achieved in the socialist countries has made sex relations there more healthy and moral.

The boot is on the other foot. To see sex life in its degenerate form, clandestine or open, one has to go to New York, London, Paris and Tokyo. And the great protectors of the 'sanctity of the family and motherhood' are so shameless about it that every third month they send us a movie picture of night life in this 'free' city and that, bringing their filth to Bombay, Calcutta and New Delhi.

The same has been proved to be true about religious freedom. Those who cynically inflame and exploit Buddhist vs. Christian 'differences' in Saigon for enthroning one puppet today and kicking him out the next day (often out of this world, too), those who constantly 'teach' India and Pakistan that they are 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' states and 'hence' must eternally go at each other's throat, those who take nearly two centuries to elect their first catholic president (whom they murdered very soon), now find it difficult to accuse the communist countries of suppressing religion.

Anyone can now go and count up the mosques in Tashkent and Baku or the churches in Warsaw and Prague. If the younger generation in the socialist countries prefers to solve its social and ethical problems with the aid of the science of human welfare instead of god and the priest, well, that is their affair. Everyone must be free to follow the religion or faith of his choice. Everyone must be equally free not to believe in any other-worldly philosophy.

So these are becoming rather anachronistic weapons of anti-communist propaganda. We have to come to those which are still live.

Do you believe in democracy or do you believe in dictatorship? Do you accept parliamentary democracy or not? Do you believe in peaceful methods or in violence? How about individual liberty and the right of opposition under socialism? Why are you opposed to 'democratic socialism'? Will socialist India become a 'camp-follower' of Russia?—this is the volley that is constantly fired at us, quite often,

no doubt, by people who appreciate many things in communism but still share the misgivings and doubts implied in these questions.

The reply to these questions has to begin by putting a counter-question to those who not only deify parliamentary democracy but also make a mystique of it like a mantram from the Vedas.

Will such people explain why the historical experience of parliamentary democracy till now is that it leads not to socialism but to the development of monopoly capitalism, quite often ending up with a fascist dictatorship? And if such people are serious about socialism, should they not first ask themselves as to why this should happen instead of self-complacently flinging accusations against us about dictatorship and regimentation?

This counter-question has not been raised for the purpose of polemisation. The point is that it cannot be denied that the fundamental socio-economic basis of the parliamentary system has been and remains capitalism, and its historical function has been to provide the political superstructure of capitalism, to nurture capitalism, to develop monopoly capital.

We can cite two examples. Thirty years ago, when the Spanish lefts and radicals (communists included) won a parliamentary majority in their country through strictly constitutional methods, and proceeded to introduce economic and social reforms which were as yet very far removed from socialism, Churchill refused to support the constitutional, republican Spanish government against the unconstitutional, counter-revolutionary rebellion organised by Franco. And what was the reason which Churchill gave for such refusal? He bluntly stated that no government could be considered constitutional or parliamentary which did not defend the right of private property. There you have the bedrock of parliamentarism of which Churchill should know more than all the experts in India.

And why go to Spain when we have our own experience to go by? Hell-fire was let loose against the democratically

elected, parliamentary, communist government of Kerala for no other reason than that it started taking some serious measures against landlordism and attempted to rescue education from the clutches of the feudal catholic church. And this was done by those who, while never ceasing to sermonise to us about the holy sanctity of parliamentary democracy, openly joined hands with the declared enemies of democracy, viz. the catholic church and the British tea-planters in Kerala. These are the naked realities of life which those who deify parliamentary democracy must ponder over.

One cannot have it both ways. One cannot eat the cake and have it, too. One cannot sing paeans of praise to parliamentary democracy so long as it subserves the interest of capitalism, the feudal elements, and so on, and run away from it as soon as capitalists and their agents lose control over parliament and it shows signs of becoming a weapon in the hands of the toiling and oppressed people against the lords of property.

We, communists, want to broaden and deepen parliamentary democracy. We believe that historical conditions now exist in which this can be done provided a certain course is followed to which we will come in a moment.

We have always recognised that parliamentary democracy provides opportunities to the people to organise themselves and fight for their economic and political advance, provided it does not function only as a facade with the basic democratic rights of the people, such as freedom of speech, press, organisation, the right to strike etc. abolished in all but name.

We have invariably and everywhere defended such a parliamentary democracy against all reactionary attacks and conspiracies to undermine it and replace it by a reactionary fascist dictatorship.

But we surely do not deify it, make a fetish of it, consider it the last word in the historical development of democracy.

And that because the basic and acid test of any democracy in our age is whether it can or cannot become a people's instrument for the abolition of all exploitation and advancing to socialism. If it stands this test, then alone is it a true democracy of the 20th century. If not, there is something profoundly wanting in it, no matter that it may have all the paraphernalia of adult franchise, responsible government, a judiciary separated from the executive, the sacred British 'rule of law', and what not.

Parliamentary or otherwise, democracy in the genuine, i.e., highest sense of the term, cannot be raised on the pedestal of landlordism and monopoly capital.

So the question is not at all one of putting the communists' loyalty to parliamentary democracy to test. The question is not of asking us to swear by it with our hands on the Bible.

The real question is of getting down seriously to the task of broadening and deepening parliamentary democracy, say, our own in India, so that it becomes a people's instrument for advancing towards and building socialism. The question is of frankly seeing and recognising that Indian parliamentary democracy, during the last nineteen years, has served increasingly as an instrument of the money bags. That is where one ought to begin instead of indulging in cheap clap-trap about democracy and dictatorship.

And the process *can* be reversed. As explained in an earlier section there is every possibility in India of transforming Parliament and parliamentary institutions into an instrument of the people's will.

Socialist aims and ideals are sweeping ahead in India and in the newly-independent countries. The basic forces of socialism, the working class, white-collar workers and the peasantry are far better organised, far more conscious and militant than ever before.

Under the conditions, basing ourselves squarely on united mass struggles as explained earlier, we have every opportunity of turning Parliament from a weapon in the hands

of capital to attack the people, into a weapon in the hands of the people to counterattack capital and reaction.

Besides mass struggles, what else must be done to bring about such a transformation? This is a big subject if we attempt to go into all the spheres of social, economic cultural and political activity in which socialists must intervene to bring about the desired change. Here we can only give a few illustrations to elucidate the point.

Take the question of planning. Will it weaken or strengthen Indian democracy, or parliamentary democracy if one must necessarily and always use that word, if the trade unions and peasant organisations in India are given a due role and authority in the matter of drawing up plans for India's industrial and agricultural development?

All excepting those who suffer from an inferiority complex towards organisations like the FICCI, or the top brass of the Indian civil service, or American economic experts and their hangers-on in India—all excepting such elements will agree that our trade unions and well developed peasant organisations will give us far better plans, not only on the question of how to reduce economic inequalities and advance towards an egalitarian society (the pet cliches of our planners) but even in technical matters connected with increasing industrial, food and raw material production.

But is this being done today? Our planners, who trim and chop their plans at the merest frown from the FICCI tycoons or a third-class American 'expert' have never cared a farthing for what trade unions and peasant organisations have to say about industrial and agricultural development.

Another instance. If the working class is given a reasonable living wage, if the recognition of trade unions is based on secret ballot of the workers in the industry concerned, and if such trade unions are given effective authority to participate in the management of industry, will our industries run more efficiently and smoothly or not? And does this not apply both to industry in the public and the private sector?

Barring the employers and the self-glorifying bureaucrats who run our public sector industries, everyone will agree that our industry will run better with such workers' participation in management. And will parliamentary democracy be violated if this is done? Then why is it not done? The reply is obvious.

Our rulers are constantly speaking of 'giving the workers a feeling of belonging' so that they may participate enthusiastically in industrial production. Let them take the steps described above and there will be no need to give the workers 'a feeling of belonging'. That feeling will come automatically. But they treat the worker with contempt and then want to give him that feeling by some trick. Naturally they get what they deserve, viz. strikes.

Let us come to the execution of progressive economic and social legislation. One does not at all need to be a communist or fire-eating revolutionary to agree that a vital and vast socio-economic transformation of our agrarian and rural life such as the implementation of land reforms can never be carried out by the administration alone even if we had officials who are less woodenheaded and who have some sympathy for the people.

If we are at all serious and sincere about land reforms, then elected peasant and agricultural labour committees have got to be invested with the necessary authority to carry out land reforms in collaboration with the official machinery. Even pragmatically this is indispensable considering the labyrinth of land rights in India which is literally confounding. Much more so if we consider the question from a social angle.

Our bureaucracy comes from the landed class, and the surest way of transforming even a decent piece of land legislation (which our Land Reforms Acts are not) intended to transfer land from the landlord to the tenants, into one for evicting the tenants from the land, is to hand it over for execution to our existing bureaucracy. And yet, as we all know, this is precisely what has been done so that our land-to-the-tiller Acts have turned into tenant-eviction Acts.

Even legislation for the rooting out of untouchability, the abolition of the dowry system, or ending child marriages cannot be enforced in our country with any degree of satisfaction without running a powerful mass campaign, surely for persuading, but also for bringing powerful mass pressure against those who pursue such anti-social practices. It cannot be enforced without unleashing a gigantic initiative of the people and without their active participation in the implementation of popular legislation. Necessary people's organs for carrying out such social reforms can be created.

Will such an approach accentuate social and economic conflict in the country? It will. But the more we inspire and draw the masses themselves *actively* into the implementation of progressive social and economic legislation, creating the necessary organs for such implementation and vesting them with the necessary authority, the more we will find that the conflict at bottom is between the vested interests and the common people.

To avoid this path under the sanctimonious cover of fidelity to nonviolence and parliamentary democracy, is sheer hypocrisy, nothing less. It is blasphemy of the cause of democracy to say that the approach herein suggested vitiates the spirit and approach of democracy.

There is endless talk going on about putting life into village panchayats and congress leaders glorify them as the hoary repositories of Indian democracy. The only way of putting life into the village panchayats is the one herein suggested. Or else, they will remain what they are, mere wooden limbs and rubber stamps of the bureaucracy.

This is a vast subject. So only a few simple illustrations have been given indicative of the approach one has to make if parliamentary institutions are to cease being an instrument of the vested interests and serve the cause of the people. The approach must also be extended to the judiciary and the organs for maintaining 'law and order'.

Will this transformation be peaceful or violent? The Communist Party wants it to be peaceful and we are pledged

to make every possible effort to bring it about peacefully. And the reason is extremely simple. The toiling people of India have everything to gain and nothing to lose by the transformation being peaceful.

One of the worst distortions of Marxism constantly indulged in by all reactionaries is that communists thirst for bloodshed. Why should they, why, in fact, should any normal human being thirst for bloodshed, a hundred times more so when the masses have no arms while the ruling class is armed to the teeth? In a non-peaceful transformation, it will be the people's blood, first and foremost, that will flow like water. There is no imaginable reason why we should want such a thing to happen.

But this is clearly not a question of our desire or efforts alone. If the undermining of Indian democracy goes on as now, if the government resorts to more and more firings and killings of peaceful citizens asking for bread and employment, if not only Communist Party but all progressive and left parties and the voice of democracy are suppressed in days to come, if, as is the experience of other countries, the suppression of the Communist Party ends up with the suppression of all democrats—if all these things happen despite our efforts to the contrary, what will be the path which Indian democrats and socialists will follow?

Clearly this is a question which history has to decide. No one can assure that the path after that will be peaceful. But, in that contingency, the question will not face the communists alone. It will face all socialists, all democrats, in fact, all lovers of national freedom, because there is not the remotest doubt that suppression of communism and democracy in our country will invariably be accompanied by India being turned into an American, or Anglo-American puppet. This much clarification should suffice for all honest people who raise this question.

Whatever the mode of transformation, the state that will emerge after the transformation will be a genuine instrument of the people's will, a state that will be able to carry

the country forward to socialism overcoming all the resistance that reaction and the vested interests will offer.

In the event of India, advancing through the path of a national-democratic front against imperialism, the landlords and Indian monopolists, as described till now, and in the event of its achieving power and proceeding towards the construction of a socialist India, shall we permit the continuation of an opposition or opposition parties?

To reply to this question, it is firstly necessary to clear up the cobwebs of confusion, over-simplification and naivete with which it is usually surrounded.

It has to be realised that the path to power outlined above clearly requires a gigantic, nationwide unity of the Indian people, of all progressive and left parties, of all independent democrats and patriots, to be able to defeat reaction and achieve power.

There is no place for tricks, for opportunistic alliances based on power politics, in such a path to power. It is a path of immense and broad mass struggles, of patient and persistent efforts to unify not only all political parties devoted to the cause of the people, but all honest and good people. When power comes into the hands of such an alliance, may one ask, who is the opposition? What and whom will it represent?

The opposition, in such a situation will really constitute the diehard vested interests, hardened reactionaries and such social elements, a very small minority, as will support them.

The experience of socialist democracies is, that under these conditions, the counter-revolutionary opposition resorts to most vicious conspiracies, to fraud, violence and sabotage, and is invariably backed up, materially and with arms, by the imperialists. Such opposition continues for years during which the overthrown exploiting classes attempt to regain their lost power.

Clearly, no reasonable person will maintain that the right of opposition means the right to overthrow a revolutionary

people's government with guns and bullets supplied by the imperialists, the right to replace it with a fascist, counter-revolutionary dictatorship.

In reality, the position is often worse. Fourteen imperialist and feudal despotic states brazenly invaded the Soviet Union with their regular armies after the great October revolution of 1917. It was they that provided the sinews for the tsarist generals and princes who organised the counter-revolution in Russia and Central Asia. It took four years for the Russian and Central Asian people to crush the counter-revolution for which hundreds of thousands had to pay with their life. One cannot defeat counter-revolution with kid gloves on.

With all this, the position of our party is that opposition in a socialist India will not be suppressed by force if it remains within the bounds of law. It is no principle of Marxism that opposition must be suppressed just because it is opposition.

However, let us move beyond the doctrinaire presentation of the 'right of opposition' to the reality of the problem that will have to be dealt with.

The real problem that will have to be faced in a socialist regime is that of dissident opinions held by parties, elements, groups, individuals, etc., who are loyal to the cause of socialism, and yet may not agree with this or that specific measure that the government may decide to adopt and implement.

Freedom for the expression and organisation of such opinion will surely be there. Without that socialist democracy cannot grow and advance.

Socialist democracy is not a static condition of society, something whose functioning, once having achieved a state of perfection, does not change, and hence tolerates no criticism. On the contrary, socialist democracy is a constant process of growth, which needs free and frank discussion of all public matters (economic, political, social, educational, aesthetic, cultural and what not) for its constant develop-

ment and progress. Such discussion and exchange of opinions are the very sap and life of a socialist state.

And this is precisely what is happening in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries (barring China) for the last so many years.

The more the threat of counter-revolution receded in these countries the freer have been discussions and the expression of personal and group opinions in various spheres of social and public life. We are making this generalisation with regard to the long-term, basic process, not with regard to aberrations and malpractices of the period of the cult of personality which had no historical justification.

The process of democratisation under socialist democracy advances together with industrial and economic development, together with the gradual elimination of the exploiting classes, together with the extension of socialist culture and consciousness, together with the growth of a younger generation trained for various technical jobs and also imbued with the spirit of socialism.

Such alone can be the truly historical and objective posing of the problem, and such is our frank reply to it.

We can now dispose of the question of what is called democratic socialism. There is no need to go into the hoary history of the question, theoretical and practical, in Europe or anywhere else. The simple point is that there is no country in the world where those who claim to believe in democratic socialism as contraposed to Marxism, have built socialism. Introduction of social insurance, free education, cheap housing, etc., is not socialism, by any stretch of imagination, and that too has not always been done by social-democratic labour governments.

The crux of this question is that those who claim to champion democratic socialism have traditionally made communism and the revolutionary working-class movement the target of their attack instead of capitalism. And it is no longer a question of theory but immense practical experience spread over half a century that socialism can never be

built on the basis of the philosophy of anti-communism. In fact, the philosophy of anti-communism is the philosophy of world imperialism and counter-revolution which is what the democratic socialists land themselves in, time and again.

This does not mean that communist parties claim to be above criticism. We are human, neither more nor less, and hence liable to err. In fact, no one has ever succeeded in doing anything worthwhile if he has never made a mistake. So we welcome criticism from all, and learn from it. But criticism is one thing; the philosophy of anti-communism is totally different.

Happily, growing trends in the camp of what is called democratic socialism are changing their attitude towards the Soviet Union and the communist parties in various countries. This is happening in Europe and also in India. If democratic socialists start seeing that whatever their differences with us, the prime task of both is to join hands to fight imperialism, capitalism and feudal hangovers, the rest will follow. Differences will be straightend out in the course of time and experience.

It is necessary to refer to a vital question before we close. India's struggle for socialism cannot be separated from the worldwide struggle for the abolition of colonialism, the international struggle for peace, democracy, national independence and socialism. Socialism in India can win only as a part of this whole. Wherever it occurs, imperialist aggression must be fought. A policy of namby-pamby ambivalence on Vietnam is utterly incompatible with fighting for socialism in India. In fact, Vietnam today has become the focal point of the world struggle for democracy, national independence, peace and socialism. It is criminal for any Indian socialist to keep out of it.

Our conflicts with China and Pakistan can also be solved only in such a context and in relation to it. There can be no question that we were right in defending our country from the aggression committed against it by these two countries. We shall defend ourselves again if we are attacked. But at

the same time, every possible effort has to be made to arrive at a peaceful, negotiated settlement of these two problems, which are not only a threat to us, but to world peace and harmony.

Clearly, we have to go on strengthening our efforts for Afro-Asian solidarity and for building closer relations with the socialist countries, above all, the Soviet Union. It is nonsense to talk of such a policy as one of joining the 'Soviet camp' and so on. It is a policy of mutual assistance and friendship, based on the equality and sovereignty of both the countries, for the cause of world freedom and socialism. It is the only foreign policy which corresponds to our own national interest, the interest of democracy, economic development and socialism in India. There is no advance for us except by marching in step, hand-in-hand, with the world forces fighting imperialism and reaction for peace, prosperity and happiness.

Such according to our party, is India's path to socialism, the path to a proud, prosperous and happy future for our people and our country. Socialism must win in India, as in all other countries. There is no other way.

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