

# Capitalistically Undeveloped Countries and Socialism

By M. Altschuler

SOME of the so-called Marxists are fond of laboring under the delusion that Socialism is not possible in any country which has not undergone a thorough process of capitalist development. They are also on the alert to quote disconnected phrases from Marx and Engels tending to prove the substantiality of their thesis. But upon careful examination of their arguments we are bound to come to the conclusion that both their arguments and the quotations torn from the original context are deceptive.

Marx and Engels have never, either in verbal or written form, committed themselves to the idea that Socialism is not possible in a capitalistically undeveloped country. What Marx and Engels insisted upon is that society is undergoing a gradual evolutionary process, that society is bound to pass through certain incomplete economic epochs in order to attain a socialized, co-operative form of economy. And by "society" Marx and Engels did not mean a particular country, but the entire human race; the "uncivilized" as well as the "civilized" regions of the globe, which are directly or indirectly involved in the process of capitalist development.

Of course, backward savage tribes like the Hottentots or Bushmen are not suitable material for a co-operative form of government (although good enough for capitalistic exploitation), as first, the constitution of their brains has not reached the level of thinking rationally and universally, prerequisite mental conditions for a complex form of government, and second, being situated in such regions as remove them from civilizing influences and traditions. But a country which is situated on the very edge of Civilization possesses in its organism the potentiality of being developed and transformed into a form of government that is widely prevalent in the adjacent countries.

Karl Marx has established a fundamental truth, equal in its importance to the doctrine of the origin of species as formulated by Darwin; that society is going through a process of historical stages, as Savagery, Barbarism, Medievalism, Feudalism, Capitalism, and that the latest will be Socialism. Upon analyzing the history of the human race we are bound to realize the validity of this almost axiomatic truth, as we find that almost every great modern nation has undergone this process of development or is in a state of such development. However, this process is to be understood as a general, and not as a particular or individual, one affecting every country under the sun. This process is strikingly noticeable in the primordial, primitive societies which, owing to peculiar geographic and climatic forces, were driven to abandon the rude, rustic notions, ideas and implements and seek better, more cultivated means of production. Likewise, in the modern era, it is these countries that are at first overwhelmed with a spirit of restlessness and activity, imbued with the desire to overthrow the antiquarian shackles of thinking and yearn for a happier future, which are situated in most favorable climatic and geographic regions.

Having this view in mind we come to understand why the races which occupy the most distant portions of the globe, are still living in a state of culture characteristic of the era of Barbarism, why the Spanish people are still lagging behind the normal course of Civilization, why the Chinese are just merely beginning to arise from the lethargy of helplessness which riveted them for centuries.

Hence it is geographic, climatic, and like fundamental conditions which are instrumental in either accelerating or impeding progress.

Therefore, this historical process of evolution of which Marx and Engels are sponsors, is affecting those nations and countries which are most favorable to further progression. The era of Feudalism or Capitalism is merely a compass, a symbol indicating

the general process of human progress; it simply points out how far humanity has evolved.

Feudalism was an inevitable state in the history of the human race, Capitalism was an unavoidable link in the chain of human progression, but neither of these stages are essential to the perpetuation of every nation forming a component member of the feudalistic or capitalistic eras. Feudalism is merely a symbol of a particular era, likewise, Capitalism is a symbol of another historical era, but an era may be capitalist historically and yet the era as an entity may not be entirely capitalistic.

In other words, although the capitalistic mode of production and distribution may characterize the general nature of the present epoch, yet it does not preclude the existence of states in the same era which, in their nature, are either characteristic of antiquarian times or of a system of society distinguished by its advanced co-operation and economic harmony.

And this is precisely the quintessence of Marxism and of the Marxian Historical Conception of History. What Marx attempted to prove is that the human race, and not a specific nation, is bound to pass, in its onward and forward procession, certain historic epochs each of which is distinguished by its peculiar modes of production and distribution of the means of livelihood.

Having this historical outlook, we are able to understand the so-called mysteries, "the anomalies of history" which so much perturb and stupefy many a thinker and so-called Marxist.

Utilizing this historical compass in our valuation of history, we are enabled to see the causes that make possible the occurrence of the phenomenal Russian Revolution which in its later phase has assumed the nature of Social Revolution.

How is it possible for a feudal, semi-civilized country like Russia to leap over Capitalism and establish Socialism? How is it feasible for an illiterate, semi-barbaric moujik to rise to such a height of mental and moral development, essential to the process of revolutionary, epoch-making changes? How is it conceivable for the Russian nation to manage a Socialist regime, a regime which presupposes the complex development of a capitalist state, cry the pseudo-Marxists? And they eagerly prophesy that the initial Socialist Republic is bound to fail, offering the Paris Commune as their favorable illustration. Poor, sophisticated Marxists!

True, Russia has been governed by a feudal, militaristic regime, so reactionary in its nature that it even impeded the normal growth of capitalist industries. The Capitalists, or the Bourgeoisie, of Russia were revolting against the damnable, reactionary policies of the Czar, just as the oppressed and the down-trodden peasants and workers did. And it is precisely because Capitalism was impeded in Russia, that the power of the capitalistic class was abortive, that the downfall of Czarism and the ultimate triumph of the oppressed was possible.

Russia may not be entirely ready for Socialism in an economic sense, but she was certainly ready for it morally and mentally even in the 19th century. Being on the very edge of European civilization, she has always been the hive of European advanced thought and ideals. The works of Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, Kausky, Lassal, Bebel, and of other revolutionary luminaries have always found an enthusiastic response on the part of the "semi-civilized" Russians; in fact, revolutionary literature was more widely read in "the land of the knout" than in classical England, the land of the "civilized, class-conscious" worker; and the pinnacle of capitalist development.

The Russian worker and peasant, denied all public education, have been yearning for light; under-

ground, in cellars, in basements, in stables, the workers of Russia assembled and were instructed in the highest social sciences and imbued with intellectual vision and ideals by the returned European exile. The intelligenzia of Russia have been systematical organizing campaigns of education, despite all oppression and suppression—and this remarkable outburst on the part of the proletariat is a logical sequence of the underground propaganda and agitation carried on unceasingly by the cultured idealists for the last 40 or 50 years.

No other workers of Europe, with the exception of the German, have been trained in the fundamental tenets of Socialism and other kindred sciences as has the Russian "moujik," the despicable character in the eyes of the "superior" European.

The Russian Revolution is a complete success, the initial Socialist Republic is a positive triumph, both from an economic and a moral standpoint—provided the Russians are left alone to mold their own destinies and the advanced "proletariat" of the developed capitalist countries will assist the Russians by supplying them with material means and food.

The Russian Revolution, if it fails—though no when the German Revolution seems to have become an accomplished fact it is hardly possible that it will fail—will fail either because of foreign intervention or the denial of economic help on the part of neighbors.

There is a bright star on the hitherto cloud-ridden horizon: the workers of Europe are rising; one can already see the onward tread of the awakened giant, the proletariat of Europe. Stirred by the clarion call of the magnificent Russian Socialist Republic, the workers of Europe are taking possession of the economic functions of their countries thus ascertaining their own rights and assuring the successes of the Russian and German Republics.

Socialism is the symbol of the future, and the country which is most susceptible by its peculiar environment to receive revolutionary principles and ideals, is ripe for the epoch-making task of establishing the initial Co-operative Commonwealth.

The German working class was long ready for the Social Revolution, but owing to the insurmountable odds it had to contend with, on the one hand, with the powerful bureaucratic, militaristic regime, on the other hand, with the traitorous, discordant tendencies in its own ranks, the advent of the Social Revolution was greatly prolonged. In Russia the majority of the people were equally ready for the Social Revolution—the main obstacle in the way being the colossal, incompetent hierarchy of Czarism, and once that bulwark of reaction was crushed—the road was left clear for the masses.

The elements of opposition in Russia are very insignificant in numbers, and even their combined force can be easily kept in check by the proletariat, which has the military power under its command.

Capitalism, therefore, although an inevitable in the process of human society, is not necessarily an essential condition to every country forming a component member of the Capitalist era.

The Russian proletariat and peasantry, although subject to universal capitalist oppression, have nevertheless, learned the bitter lessons of Capitalism, by the experience at home and abroad, and by intellectual training. The lure of "capitalist civilization" cannot bamboozle a people whose intellect and who have seen a grander and more harmonious era.

It would appear that the peace Conference is not a non-essential industry. The "New York Times" tells us in a headline "Roosevelt drafts League of Nations," so we may consider the matter closed.