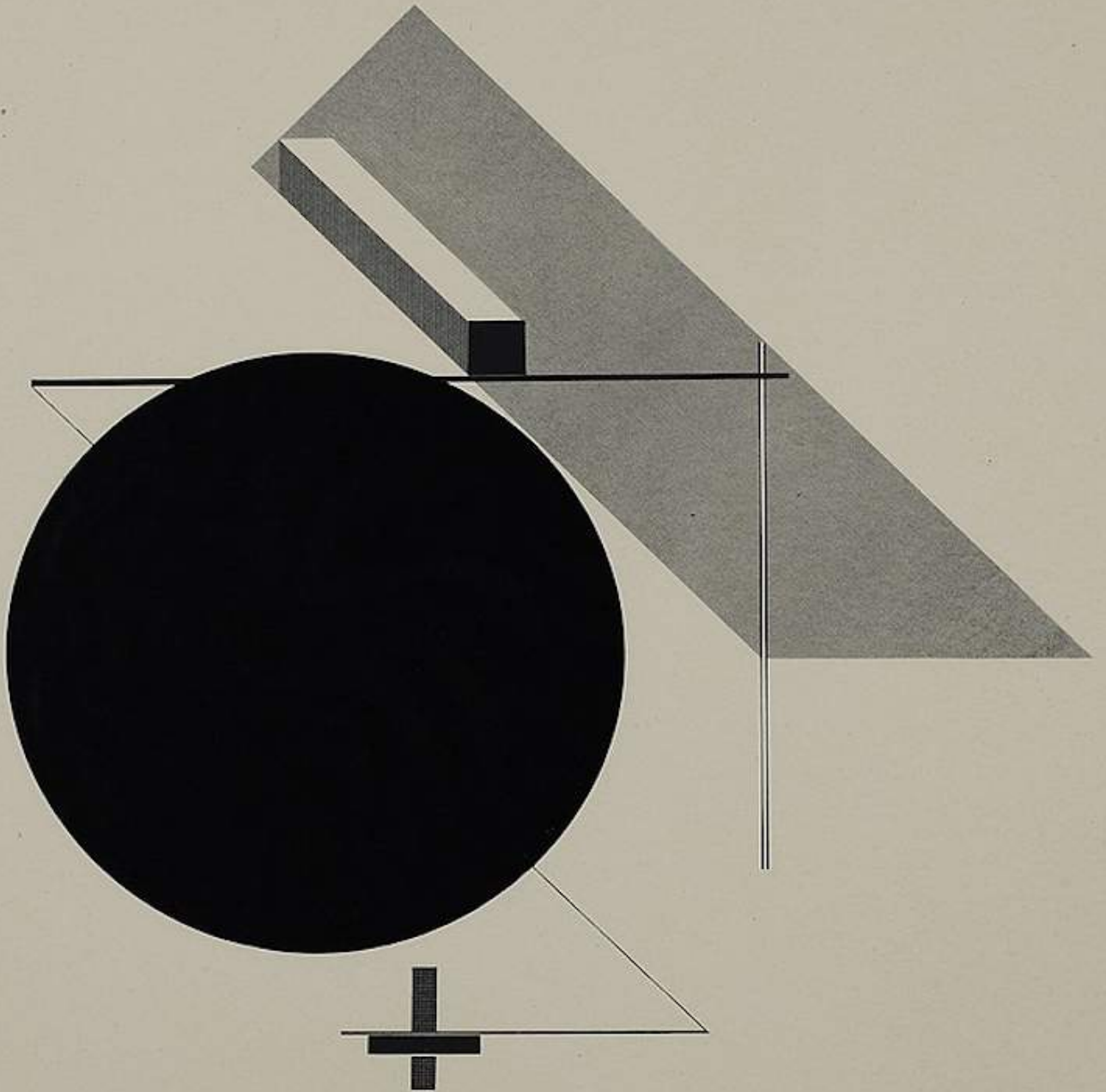


THE FUTURE SOCIALIST SOCIETY



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Introduction

What will things be like after the revolution? How will we deal with such and such a problem under socialism? How will X, Y or Z be organised? These sorts of questions are often put to Marxists. It has to be said that the answers given are frequently vague. Certainly the writings of Marx in this area are slight compared with his monumental analysis of capitalism and his works on history and contemporary politics. Although what Marx did have to say on the subject possessed all his customary brilliance and formed the basis for all subsequent Marxist thinking about socialism, it remains the case that he dealt with the major problems only in the broadest outline.

There were good reasons for this.

Before Marx the dominant school of socialism was that of the 'Utopians', such as Saint-Simon and Fourier of France and Robert Owen of England. The Utopians specialised in drawing up grandiose schemes for the future organisation of society but lacked any strategy for bringing them about, apart from appealing to the goodwill of the ruling class.

Marx was determined to differentiate his scientific socialism from this middle class daydreaming. He stressed that socialism could arise only from the actual contradictions in capitalism – the anarchy in capitalist production, and the antagonism between the working class and the bourgeoisie. This set very strict limits to predictions about the organisation of socialist society, limits which excluded any attempt at a detailed blueprint. In the main these limits remain in force today.

Since socialism emerges out of capitalism as a result of a successful struggle against it by the working class, the specific measures introduced by the revolutionary socialist government will obviously depend on the particular economic, social and political conditions at the time.

We cannot know in advance what those will be any more than we can now forecast the date of the revolution. Also, since the whole point of the socialist revolution is to place society under the conscious control of the

working class, there are many questions which it is quite futile to try to answer in advance and which must simply be left to workers of the future to decide. There is, for example, no point in trying to draw up plans now for the design of housing in a socialist society. It will all depend on the kind of houses people in the future choose to live in.

Nevertheless questions remain. If people are to take up the struggle for socialism, they want to know what they are fighting for. This is especially true when the matter has been so clouded by the phenomenon of Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe, and by the numerous other regimes around the world which claimed the title 'socialist'.

There is a need in socialist propaganda for angry denunciation of capitalism.

There is a need for hard headed analysis of the strategy and tactics of the workers' movement. But there is also a need for inspiration, for a vision of the goal which makes the struggle worthwhile.

Moreover, in certain respects we are better placed than Marx to answer some of these questions. A further century of capitalist development has involuntarily prepared the ground for socialism in many ways and made it easier to envisage how certain goals set down in principle by Marx – such as the achievement of material abundance or the overcoming of the division of labour – can actually be realised.

Also we have the advantage of a century of workers' struggle. We do not as yet have experience of full socialism in the Marxist sense. But we do have the experience of a few years of socialist revolution in Russia, and of numerous near misses – the workers' revolutions that failed like those in Spain 1936 or Hungary 1956 – which contained the seeds of socialism.

It is for these reasons that this pamphlet will attempt to set out in some detail a Marxist view of the future socialist society. I stress the word attempt because, quite apart from the personal errors and idiosyncrasies that may creep into my account, one thing is certain: the reality of socialism will differ markedly from any possible anticipation of it. This does not, however, invalidate the enterprise to try to show concretely how it is possible for humanity, through socialism, to eradicate the fundamental problems that plague it under capitalism and win real freedom.

One further preliminary point needs to be made. Socialism – or communism, to use Marx's original term – is not a ready-made state of

society that can simply be introduced the day after the revolution. Rather it is a historical process.

This process begins with the destruction of the capitalist state by workers' revolution. It is completed only when a fully classless society is achieved on a world scale – that is, when the whole human race collectively manages its affairs without class antagonism or class struggle.

Between the overthrow of capitalism and the classless society lies a period of transition. Called by Marx 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', it is more simply referred to as 'workers' power'.

When discussing the socialist future, it is always essential to bear this in mind. For what can and will be done in the initial stage when the working class, although in power, is still locked in struggle with the dispossessed bourgeoisie, is not at all the same as the possibilities that open up when humanity is at last fully united.

1. The conquest of political power

The first and most immediate task confronting a successful workers' revolution is that of consolidating its own rule and defending itself against capitalist counter-revolution. This is crucial – indeed a matter of life or death – for the experience of every revolution from the Paris Commune onwards shows that the bourgeoisie is prepared to resort to the most ruthless violence to retain its power or to regain power it has lost.

In order to break the fierce resistance of the dispossessed ruling class, which will be backed by the rest of international capitalism, the working class will have to create its own state. This state, like any other, will be a centralised organisation exercising ultimate authority in society and having at its disposal decisive armed force.

But here the resemblance between the new workers' state and the preceding capitalist state ends. The old capitalist armed forces and police will be disbanded – in essence they will already have been in a state of collapse for the revolution to have succeeded. They will be replaced with organisations of armed workers – workers' militias.

The foundation of these militias will probably have been laid in the course of the revolution and it is likely that they will be drawn from, and remain linked to, the major factories and workplaces. Unless the revolution has to fight an all out civil war or invasion, service in the militia will be on a rota basis so as to train and involve the maximum number of workers in the armed defence of their power, and to ensure that the militia do not separate themselves off from the working class as a whole.

The militia will also be in charge of everyday law and order-a task which, because of their roots in the community, they will perform far more effectively than the capitalist police.

All officers in the militia will be elected, be subject to regular re-election, and be paid average workers' wages – principles which will apply to all the officials of the new state.

However, the core institutions of the new state will be not the workers' militia but the network of workers' councils. Workers' councils are regional bodies of delegates elected from workplaces which in turn will send delegates to a national workers' council. It is this latter body that will be the highest power in the land. The government, the militia and all other state institutions will be responsible and accountable to the national workers' council.

Different political parties, providing they accept the basic framework of the revolution, will operate freely within the councils, with the party which has the majority support from the workers forming the government. In all likelihood this will be the party which has led the revolution.

The reason that we can predict this role for workers' councils is not that it has been laid down in tablets of stone by Marx (indeed Marx never mentioned workers' councils), but that every workers' revolution and every attempted workers' revolution in this century has created such bodies or the embryos of such bodies.

The first workers' council or soviet, as it was called, arose in St Petersburg in Russia during the 1905 revolution. Later examples are the Russian soviets of 1917, the workers' councils of Germany in 1918–19, and the Central Workers' Council of Budapest in 1956. Examples of embryonic councils are the factory councils in Italy in 1919–20 and the cordones in Chile in 1972.

For the same reason it would be pointless to attempt to go into further detail about the organisation of workers' councils. Such councils arise not after the revolution in accordance with some preset plan but in the course of the revolution in order to enable the working class to coordinate its forces. As organs of struggle their initial structure will necessarily be improvised to meet the requirements of the day and will thus vary enormously depending on circumstances.

At this point a vital question arises. How democratic will workers' power be?

It is true the rule of workers' councils will not be, in formal terms, an absolute democracy. There will not be complete universal suffrage because the nature of the system will exclude the old bourgeoisie and its main associates from the electoral process. But what is lacking in formal terms

will be more than made up for in terms of real democratic participation by the mass of people.

The democracy of workers' councils will be based on collective debate and discussion and on the ability of the electors, because they are a collective, to control their representatives. The mechanism of this control will be very simple. If delegates do not represent the will of their electors they will simply be recalled and replaced by mass meetings in the workplaces.

Naturally this kind of control is impossible with area based constituencies in a parliamentary system. Instead of one day's democracy every five years for everyone, in a socialist society there will be ongoing involvement in actually running the state for the vast majority.

Sometimes people worry that a system based on workplaces would exclude sections of the working class, such as housewives, pensioners, the unemployed, etc, who are not in workplaces.

Yet one of the great virtues of workers' councils is their flexibility and adaptability to the changing structure of the working class.

In the Spanish Revolution of 1936, for instance, among the key organs of workers' power were the neighbourhood committees set up in each working class district of the major cities. These bodies, representing the whole population of the district, organised and controlled workers' militias, food distribution, education and many other areas of everyday life.

Providing the core of the structure is rooted in the workplaces, there will be no reason why other groups should not form collectives and their delegates be incorporated in the councils.

The fundamental feature of the workers' state will be that it relies upon and mobilises the self activity, organising ability and creativity of the mass of the working class to build the new society from the bottom upwards. In this way it will be a thousand times more democratic than the most liberal of bourgeois democracies which, without exception, depend on the passivity of working people.

All this sounds marvellous and rightly so – it will be marvellous, as the brief periods when workers have taken control have shown. Read, for instance, John Reed's account of Russia in 1917 in *Ten Days that Shook the World* or George Orwell on Barcelona in 1936 in *Homage to Catalonia*. But

how much repression will there have to be? What freedom will there be for those who think differently?

2. Repression and freedom under workers' power

Thanks to ruling class propaganda revolution is linked in many people's minds with the guillotine and firing squads. As a result of Stalinism the post-revolutionary regime is often thought of as one of grey, repressive uniformity in which anyone who doesn't toe the party line gets a visit at four o'clock in the morning.

Both these images are linked with specific historical circumstances – above all, the defeat of the Russian Revolution. As the previous section made clear, Marxists conceive of workers' power as a vibrant workers' democracy which would vastly increase the power, rights and freedoms of working people.

Nevertheless, it has to be frankly stated that some repression, some use of direct force, will be necessary not only to overthrow the capitalist state but also after the revolution to maintain workers' power. The class struggle does not come to an end with the victory of the revolution, especially when we are as yet talking only about victory in one country.

Moreover, the very newness of the workers' state will make its rule fragile.

3. The conquest of economic power

The foundation of socialism, like that of every other form of society, lies in the economy. Consequently, the working class will immediately set about using its political power to achieve the conquest of economic power – that is to take into its hands all the major means of production in society. Unless this is done fairly rapidly, the workers will be unable to maintain their political rule.

The formal mechanism through which economic power will be established is a familiar one, namely nationalisation.

The process is likely to begin as it did in the Russian Revolution, with the nationalisation of all land. Because land is immovable, this is an extremely simple measure and can be carried out by decree on day one of the revolution. Also urgent are the nationalisation of the banks and the imposition of strict exchange controls, backed by other revolutionary measures to prevent the inevitable attempt at a flight of capital abroad.

From there the workers' state will move to the progressive takeover of the main firms and industries. Small businesses employing only one or two workers can mostly be left to later. The immediate task is to gain control of the decisive levers of economic power, of the 'commanding heights' as numerous unimplemented Labour manifestos have called them.

However, here it is necessary to distinguish sharply between this revolutionary nationalisation and the kind practised in the past by Labour (and Tory) governments. Both are forms of state ownership. But in this case the state in question is an organisation of the collective working class, as opposed to the nationalisations of the past under a capitalist state – an organisation of the capitalist class.

So, firstly, nationalisation will not simply be an action taken from above by the central state power. It will combine legal takeover at the top with workers' action at the base, in many cases through factory occupations.

Secondly, nationalisation will be without compensation, since the object of the exercise is precisely to break the economic power of the bourgeoisie.

Thirdly, and most importantly, nationalisation will be under workers' control. It is impossible to predict precise forms, but probably each factory or workplace will be run by an elected council which will be accountable to periodic mass meetings of the workforce. A similar arrangement would apply to the management of whole industries, but with representatives from the trade unions and the workers' government.

Workers' control of industry is essential. A working class that is unable to control its own workplaces will not be able to control its own state. If control of the new state industries is transferred to a privileged bureaucracy, as happened in Russia, then sooner or later this will come to exert a decisive influence in the society and class divisions will re-establish themselves.

Of course, the ability of workers to run industry is often doubted. 'There will have to be experts', is the cry, 'and it is the experts who will really control things.'

This underestimates the abilities of the working class and misunderstands the role of technical experts. Even under capitalism it is generally the workers, not management, who have the best grasp of the immediate production process. Many of the skills of management are concerned not with production but with marketing and maintaining the rate of exploitation – skills which will be redundant in the new society.

As for the layer of technical experts, they will be necessary for a period until the education of workers is dramatically improved. But they will simply work for and under the direction of the factory or industrial council just as today they work for the bosses. If they obstruct and sabotage, they will be disciplined and dealt with, just as they are if they obstruct and sabotage a capitalist firm.

If absolutely necessary they will have to perform with workers' guns at their heads, but in fact it is reasonable to suppose a victorious socialist revolution will win over a majority of such people.

Once workers' ownership and control of industry are established it will be possible to proceed to the introduction of a planned economy. Again it is necessary to distinguish between socialist planning and the capitalist, and state capitalist, planning we are used to. The plan will not be a rigid scheme

imposed from above. The working class must be the subject, not the object, of the plan.

The planning process will begin at the base in workplace meetings, factory councils and workers' councils, with a determination of people's needs and priorities and an assessment of the productive capacities of each workplace. On the basis of this input from below the government will have to draw up a coherent plan matching capacity to requirement. The whole plan will then have to be submitted to the working class for debate, and to its representatives in the workers' councils for amendment and approval.

It will be an intensely democratic process and it is only on a democratic basis that it can hope to succeed. For, as the experience of Stalinist Russia has shown, bureaucratic, authoritarian planning leads to false information being fed in from below and formal rather than real plan fulfilment.

The achievement of a workers' planned economy will not only solve the worst economic problems of capitalism (unemployment, inflation, etc.) but will open immense possibilities for the future.

At this point it is impossible to postpone further the question of spreading the revolution to other countries. For, unless this problem is tackled, all the hopes and plans for socialism will come to nothing.

4. Spreading the revolution: the international dimension

It would be enormously to the advantage of socialism and the working class for the socialist revolution to occur more or less simultaneously in a number of countries. Nevertheless so far in this pamphlet I have assumed a revolution occurring first of all only in one country.

This is realistic. The experience of revolutions up to the present suggests that, despite the drawing together of all nations in the modern world, the differences in the national patterns of class struggle are such that the revolutionary breakthrough will probably at first be confined to a single country.

This being the case, the spreading of the revolution beyond these boundaries will be a task of paramount importance for the young workers' state. This task is not just a matter of internationalist duty, but also absolutely vital for the self preservation of the revolution.

Socialism cannot be built in one country. Indeed a workers' state cannot survive indefinitely in one country. Of course, it is possible to hold out for a period against the weight of international capitalism, just as workers can maintain a factory occupation or an uprising in an individual city for a time. But sooner or later, unless the revolution spreads, it will go down to defeat. Either world capitalism, which as long as it exists remains stronger than the isolated workers' state, will crush the revolution by military intervention, or the threat of such intervention, combined with intense economic pressure, will eventually oblige the revolutionary state to compete with capitalism on capitalism's terms. This will mean a competitive struggle to accumulate capital.

If the latter variant occurs, as it did in Russia at the end of the 1920s, then a new exploitative class will emerge as the agency of capital accumulation, and capitalism will be restored by internal counter-revolution.

Overthrowing the whole of capitalism, however, may seem a daunting task. So the question we must ask is whether it is possible.

In this, as in all other areas of the class struggle, it is naturally impossible to give any guarantees. But there are a number of factors which permit us to say confidently that it can be done.

The international nature of the capitalist economy makes its crises international too. So the crisis lying behind the revolution in one country will already be affecting other countries. The first revolutionary breakthrough, provided it is in one of the larger economies, will greatly deepen this crisis.

A socialist revolution in South Africa, for example, will not only have a devastating effect on world gold and diamond markets but also completely transform the situation throughout southern Africa. All the economic power that has been used to keep the working class in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana in subjection will become a factor for revolutionary progress. A Brazilian revolution would have a similar effect on the whole of Latin America.

The political impact of the revolution will be even more important—as shown by the shock waves that circled the world after 1917, sparking strikes and uprisings as far apart as Glasgow and Seattle. The very existence of an example of real workers' power and workers' democracy will cause an ideological crisis in the ruling classes both East and West. In the West it will dramatically challenge our rulers' all too successful identification of socialism with tyranny, and in the East it will fatally undermine the belief that the former Stalinist bureaucracies represented genuine socialism.

At the same time the revolution will give inspiration to workers' movements everywhere. It will show that the working class can take power into its own hands and thus make the case for revolutionary socialism infinitely easier to argue. Also many of the divisions and splits in the ranks of the socialist and revolutionary movement will be healed, because there will be concrete proof of the strategy and tactics necessary to achieve victory.

All of this will be greatly aided by modern communications. After the Russian Revolution (the last time there was a real chance of international revolution) it was months before even the most involved revolutionaries in other countries had a clear picture of what had happened. After a future

revolution the reality of workers' power will be flashed around the world on television screens.

But of course the victorious revolution will not just sit back and wait for all this to happen. It will bend every effort to speed the process.

This is not a matter of trying to impose revolution by invading other countries (though the new workers' state will certainly be prepared to give military assistance to other revolutionary struggles). It means that the workers' state will use its authority to appeal to workers worldwide to overthrow their own rulers. It means organising a revolutionary movement internationally.

The new workers' state will form – if one does not exist already – a workers' international to build, coordinate and unite revolutionary workers' parties in every country.

Moreover, once workers' power spreads to several countries all the factors outlined above will be greatly magnified. An irresistible momentum will build up. In the 1960s the strategists of US imperialism feared the 'domino' effect of Vietnam and other national liberation struggles. The domino effect of workers' revolutions, with an internationalist outlook, will be far, far greater.

At this point let us make a leap and assume the victory of the socialist revolution worldwide. It is a huge assumption – but not, as I have tried to show, a utopian one. It is worth considering some of its implications.

It will mean that the threat of capitalist counter-revolution will be ended once and for all and that the threat of nuclear annihilation is lifted from the human race.

It will mean that national wars, which have claimed well over 100 million lives this century, will cease.

It will mean that the problems of world poverty and underdevelopment can be tackled and overcome in a coordinated way, that people will move freely over the face of the globe and that the roots of racism will be destroyed.

It will mean that international socialism, the harnessing of all the world's resources for the benefit of united humanity, will become a reality.

5. Producing for need: towards abundance

The establishment of a planned socialist economy on an international scale will put an end to the recurring crises of capitalism which result in the destruction and waste of productive resources through bankruptcies, under-investment, overproduction and mass unemployment. It will mean the truly immense scientific, technological, economic and human resources currently devoted to the preparation and waging of war will be redirected to socially useful purposes.

When you consider that one British Challenger tank costs around £2 million, that the Trident missile system will cost an estimated £42 billion over its lifetime, that Reagan's Star Wars cost upward of \$100 billion, you get some idea of the economic potential that will be released.

Socialism will also remove the enormous waste inherent in capitalist production with its duplication of effort-the manufacture of numerous but essentially similar washing powders, cars, radios and so on. It will put an end to the massive sums spent on advertising and production of superfluous luxuries for the rich. The quality and productivity of labour will greatly increase because the producers will – for the first time – have a direct vested interest in production and be healthier and vastly better educated.

In short, international socialism will bring about a phenomenal development of the productive forces which will rapidly eclipse all that has been achieved in this sphere in the whole of past history. It is this economic advance which will lay the material basis for the transition to a completely classless society.

In the first place it will make it possible to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter – the necessities of life – for everyone on the face of the planet. Never again will any child die of malnutrition or of easily preventable disease. This alone would be more than enough to justify socialism. But in fact it is only the beginning of what socialism will offer.

Beyond the achievement of a decent standard of living for all lies the road to abundance and free distribution according to need.

This point is fundamental to the Marxist conception of the higher stage of socialism, or communism as Marx called it, and requires further explanation.

From the start the socialist revolution will produce a great equalisation in the distribution of goods compared with the massive inequalities built into capitalism. The enormous accumulations of wealth deriving from exploitation and property ownership will be expropriated and the inflated salaries paid by the ruling class to itself and to a section of the middle class will disappear. The wages of the working class, and especially the low paid, will be rapidly increased.

Nevertheless, at first – because socialism begins with the resources it inherits from capitalism – the supply of goods will remain limited and workers will still work for money wages which in turn they will use to purchase these goods. Progressively, however, socialism will increase the production of an ever wider range of goods to the point where supply exceeds demand. It will then become possible to cease selling these goods and begin distributing them on the basis of need.

To illustrate how this can be done let us take the example of water. In many parts of the world today water – especially clean water – remains in desperately short supply. But in all the advanced industrialised countries the problem of water has been overcome – even under capitalism. There is more than enough water to go round, so it is simply available to everybody ‘on tap’. This does not result in people madly consuming water. Apart from a certain amount of waste which is easily accommodated, people just consume what they need.

What capitalism has been able to do for water, socialism – with the growth of the productive forces outlined above – will be able to do across the board.

Housing will be an obvious area to start. We will simply build more houses than there are people to house and allocate them according to need. In order to move, people will either transfer to vacant accommodation or exchange houses instead of buying and selling them. Such an arrangement would not only solve the problem of homelessness but also be infinitely

simpler to operate than the present tedious and complex house buying system.

It goes without saying that education and health services will be completely free. So too will public transport, which will be massively expanded (probably to the point where the private car becomes redundant).

As each service becomes free, so the labour of all the various money collectors – from estate agents to bus conductors – will be put to better use.

In time the free distribution principle will spread from water, housing, health, education and transport to food, clothing, communications, entertainment and so on, until it becomes all embracing. Buying and selling will fade away. Money – seemingly the all powerful god of capitalist society, but in reality only the means by which the products of human labour are exchanged – will steadily lose its usefulness to the point where it can be dispensed with altogether.

Thanks to the capitalist indoctrination we all receive from birth, this may seem outlandish. But given the premise that international socialism will unleash the productive forces hitherto confined and restricted by capitalism, there is nothing unrealistic about it.

In fact there is only one serious counter-argument – namely that if everything is free, nobody will bother to work.

6. The transformation of work

Work is central to human life, to the life of the individual and the life of society. It was through work, through productive labour, that the human species first differentiated itself from other animals. It is the experience of work that is the main factor in shaping the personality of each individual. The way in which a society works to produce goods is the foundation of all its social and political relations.

Yet under capitalism work is overwhelmingly a negative experience for the vast majority of people – that is for the working class. It is destructive of health and destructive of spirit. Work is fragmented to the point where people are required to specialise all their lives in the endless repetition of narrow mechanical tasks. It is exhausting, humiliating and, above all, boring. It produces luxury, leisure and culture for the capitalists, but stunted personalities and stunted lives for workers.

The transformation of work is therefore a central task of the socialist revolution. In the long run it is the most important task of all.

The first steps of the revolution – the nationalisation of industry under workers' control – will lay the basis for this transformation by ending the exploitation and the pursuit of profits that make work the way it is at present. From the start, the experience of work will be changed by workers' control.

It will put a stop to the daily humiliations that workers suffer at the hands of bosses, managers and supervisors of all kinds. It will make safety at work the first, rather than last, priority, and add enormously to the interest of the job.

But at the outset the actual labour performed – the minding of machines, the digging of coal, the typing of letters, etc. – will, of necessity, be roughly as it is under capitalism. As the productive forces develop, however, all this will change completely – a change which will involve three interlinked processes.

Firstly, the working week will be systematically reduced. Under capitalism advances in technology are used to displace workers. We see the combination of millions of workers on overtime and millions on the dole. With socialist planning, the total work required will be shared equally and every technological advance will lessen the amount of physical work that is needed.

This is crucial – not only because it will reduce physical hardship, but also because it will free workers to develop educationally and culturally and to take an active part in the general running of society in all its aspects.

Secondly, automation will be used to eliminate the most unpleasant and menial jobs. Given that under capitalism it is already possible to put rockets on the moon or Mars, it takes little imagination to see how refuse disposal, street and office cleaning, much of housework, mining and production line work could be automated.

Thirdly, the division of labour will be progressively overcome. The division of labour has two main aspects. On the one hand, there is the all pervasive division between mental and manual labour – between planners and planned, controllers and controlled – which arose with, and coincides with, the division of society into classes of exploiters and exploited. On the other hand, there is the breaking up of the productive process into smaller and smaller tasks totally lacking in skill, interest, or creativity, which is particularly the product of capitalist industrialisation.

It is the combination of the factors outlined above – workers' control, reduced compulsory labour time, and automation – that will eradicate both aspects of the division of labour.

Everyone will become both a producer and a planner of production. Everyone will have the time, the energy and the education to participate in the collective shaping of the environment – work which will require the fusion of artistic, scientific, technical and social knowledge, and which will be a collective, creative process.

In these conditions work will become – in Marx's words – 'not only a means of life, but life's prime want'. It will cease to be a wearisome necessity and become a positive pleasure – a means of individual and collective human expression.

Human beings are not naturally lazy. Observe the closest we can get to that mythical being, a 'natural' person – a baby or young child – and you

will see they overflow with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm for learning, for activity and for life. It is capitalism, oppression and alienated labour that wear people down, demoralise and break them, destroy their energy and convince them that life is best spent with their feet up in front of the television.

Look at the immense effort many working class people put into their hobbies, or into the labour and trade union movement. It is not difficult to see how – when work is for themselves and not for a class of exploiters, and when it is varied and interesting – the time will come when no physical or direct economic compulsion will be necessary to ensure that socially necessary labour is performed.

Socialism will bring together, in its higher stages, the habit of performing stimulating and creative work, the planning of production to meet human need, the development of science and technology, and the free distribution of an abundant supply of goods.

Once it does, there will be no obstacle to society inscribing on its banners the ultimate socialist principle: ‘From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.’

7. Women's liberation

It has become a commonplace among feminists that a socialist revolution will not automatically liberate women. They are right of course. For even after the revolution nothing happens automatically. History is made by human beings, and the struggle to overcome the oppression of women will have to be fought for and won.

Nevertheless the socialist revolution will initiate the process of ending the age old oppression of women and the transition to socialism will complete it. The reason for this is simple. Socialism is before all else the self-emancipation of the working class and the majority of the working class are women. Thus without the complete emancipation of women it is impossible to speak of the complete emancipation of the working class, and therefore impossible to speak of socialism.

This doesn't make the liberation of women automatic. But it makes the fight for women's liberation a central task in the transition to socialism. Moreover, just as miners' wives who fought in the great strike of 1984-5 were transformed by the experience, so working class women who have made a revolution will never be willing to accept the role of second class citizens.

So how will women's liberation be achieved?

First will come a number of legal measures which are very straightforward and can, and will, be taken immediately by the workers' state. These include: the abolition of every vestige of legal inequality between men and women and the outlawing of every form of discrimination against women; the establishment of the right to free contraception and free abortion on demand; the right to immediate divorce on demand and the right to equal pay and job opportunities.

It might be objected that many (though not all) of these provisions are already in force in capitalist Britain and are ineffectual-the equal pay law being the most obvious example. Here we must remember the changing

context. The fact that the workers' state will immediately become the main employer, and eventually the only employer, and that all major institutions in society will be under democratic workers' control will ensure that these laws are translated into practice.

Many other social changes will also contribute to and facilitate the liberation of women. There will be anti-sexist teaching in schools and where sexist teachers remain they will doubtless be firmly corrected by their students. The transformation in ownership and control of the media will mean that these too become a force for anti-sexism rather than for sexism as at present.

Since with the abolition of capitalist competition advertising in its present form will disappear, so too will the use of exploitative images of women to promote goods. All forms of violence against women will be seriously combatted.

However, as important and necessary as all these measures will be, none of them goes to the heart of the matter. They deal with the symptoms and effects of women's oppression rather than its source. That source lies in the position of women within the family and the role that the family has played in class divided society as a whole and in capitalist society in particular.

In capitalism today the raising of children and the care of the present generation (in economic terms, the reproduction of labour power) is primarily the responsibility of the privatised nuclear family. Within the family the burden of this work falls mainly on women. The advantages of this arrangement for capitalism are obvious – it gets its labour power produced and refreshed at minimal cost and it divides and fragments the working class.

The disadvantages for women are equally clear. Their access to paid employment is interrupted and restricted; their career prospects are damaged; they tend to be isolated in the home and to a greater or lesser extent they are economically dependent upon their husbands.

This is the root problem that will have to be solved to achieve the permanent and complete liberation of women as part of the transition to socialism.

But the family is not an institution which can be abolished overnight by decree. It has to be replaced. What is more, the institutions that replace it

have to be better at meeting the real human needs at present served by the family, so that people will adopt them voluntarily.

The key task is the efficient and caring socialisation of housework and child care. This means creating a comprehensive network of community restaurants serving a variety of cheap (eventually free) good food. It means providing communal laundry and house cleaning services. It means, above all, providing good nursery and creche facilities for every young child and properly organised baby-sitting services for every parent.

In so far as patterns of communal living are developed, which seems likely, this will considerably assist with all of these problems. It is when this is achieved that child rearing will cease to be a socially disadvantageous burden in any way and become an overwhelmingly positive experience willingly shared equally by men and women.

Likewise, who people live with and for how long will be a matter of purely personal choice, unconstricted by economic pressures or by the old religious codes and social conventions which reflect those pressures.

Women will at last be free from the subordination they have suffered since the beginning of class society 6,000 to 7,000 years ago.

Clearly the implementation of such a programme will require large economic resources, strong political will and mass involvement. No capitalist government would attempt it or could achieve it. But that is why it is only through socialism that women will win their liberation.

And hand in hand with women's liberation will come gay and lesbian liberation. Naturally the legal and educational measures undertaken to combat the oppression of women will be applied in this sphere too.

But ultimately it will be the transcendence of the bourgeois family and the achievement of real equality for women that will remove the basis of homophobia. A world where the family no longer needs to be defended, and where being 'a man' no longer means being superior to women, will be a world where the gay man and the lesbian woman are no longer perceived by anyone as a threat.

8. The end of racism

Racism is one of the most ugly and pernicious features of capitalist society. Future generations who live under socialism will need to make a considerable leap of imagination to be able to understand not just the great crimes of racism – like the Nazi Holocaust and apartheid – but also its relatively ‘minor’ manifestations like the sickening hysteria over refugees seeking asylum in Britain.

Undoubtedly they will regard such episodes as clear evidence that the society which produced them was fundamentally rotten. For socialism will eradicate racism.

By this I do not just mean that socialism will combat racism. It should go without saying that the socialist revolution will wage the most determined war on every form of racism. The workers’ state will treat as a most serious offence all racial discrimination, racial harassment, and all expressions of racist ideology. Its schools and media will combine to educate the population in a spirit of militant anti-racism.

But I mean much more than this. I mean that the socialist revolution will tear up the very roots of racism so that in time it will become a historical relic as anachronistic, absurd and irrelevant as the persecution of witches.

To see how this will happen it is necessary first to understand what these roots are.

Racism, contrary to the theories put forward by people who are in fact apologists for racism, is not a ‘natural’ or ‘instinctive’ reaction to ‘outsiders’.

Nor is it a hangover from primitive superstition based on ignorance. Unlike the oppression of women, it is not even a product of class divided society in general.

Racism is the quite specific product of the rise and development of the capitalist economic system. It was not a feature of pre-capitalist societies,

not even of the ancient slave societies of Greece and Rome. In those societies slaves (and slave owners) were both black and white. Although anti-slave ideas ('slaves are by nature inferior' and so on) were rife, they did not have a racial or skin colour connotation.

The origin of racism lies in the slave trade, in the practice of forcibly seizing and shipping millions of black Africans to the Americas to work as slaves on the plantations.

(This statement has caused some controversy. It has been argued that the existence of anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages seems to contradict the idea that racism is a product of capitalism. However, as Abram Leon showed in his book *The Jewish Question*, the anti-Semitism of the period was essentially a religious and not a racial persecution – Jews who converted to Christianity could avoid it. This is not in any way to excuse the horrors that were committed – but to insist that it has to be seen in the same light as the equally horrific persecution of minority Christian sects in the same period.)

This trade and the slavery that followed it were undertaken for economic reasons. They were immensely profitable and played a major role in the rise of capitalism. But like all forms of exploitation, they required ideological justification, and this was supplied by racism. The inhuman treatment of millions of people was legitimated by the theory that these people were subhuman.

The racism that grew from the slave trade was then further reinforced and boosted by imperialism as a whole. Capitalism, arising first in western Europe (and developing particularly in Britain), was driven by its competitive nature to scour the world for markets for its goods, for raw materials, and then for colonies as outlets for investment and sources of cheap labour. This inevitably brought the merchants, missionaries, businessmen, politicians and soldiers of European capitalism into conflict with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Asia and Africa – that is, with the black and coloured peoples of the world.

Once again justification was needed. What better than the notion that these people were childlike, primitive and incapable, and that the whole process of robbery and plunder was really for their own good—that it was the 'white man's burden' to lead them slowly to 'civilisation'.

Racism is not just a legacy of imperialism, however. It is also continually regenerated by contemporary capitalism. For capitalism rests

not only on competition between capitalists but also on competition between workers.

The structure of the capitalist economy encourages workers to see other workers as rivals for jobs, houses and so on. It is only through overcoming this competition amongst themselves that workers are able to fight back against the system.

Consequently, any ideas such as sexism, nationalism and above all racism, which set workers against each other and disrupt that unity are of great advantage to the bosses. Racism also provides the system and its ruling class with an extremely convenient scapegoat for unemployment and all the other social ills capitalism produces.

For these reasons capitalism, openly or discreetly but nonetheless persistently, stokes the fires of racism so that the racist card is always there to be played when needed.

None of this is meant to suggest that the problems of racism will be easily solved, still less that it will disappear overnight with the revolution. On the contrary, the roots of racism are very deep. The point is that they are capitalist roots and the moment capitalism is destroyed they will be deprived of further nourishment and begin to wither.

Moreover, the process of revolution will itself deal racism many powerful blows. First, because it is certain that black workers will themselves play a powerful and leading role in the revolution. Second, because unless unity is achieved between the decisive sections of the black and white working class (on the basis of total opposition to racism) the revolution cannot hope to achieve victory. Third, because a victorious, confident working class that has been through the enlightening experience of revolutionary struggle will feel no need for scapegoats.

Building on this firm basis, a socialist society which unites workers as collective owners and controllers of production rather than dividing them, which is able to solve the problems of unemployment, homelessness and poverty, and which spreads itself through international solidarity rather than imperialist conquest, will steadily eliminate the last vestiges of racism.

9. Learning for the future

The socialist revolution will awaken in the working class and in all the oppressed an enormous thirst for knowledge and education. We know this from past experience: from the Russian Revolution where workers crowded into great stadiums to hear lectures on Greek drama, from the Portuguese Revolution of 1974 when, for a period, Lenin's book *The State and Revolution* topped the bestsellers list, and from many other examples.

Millions of people, over generations, have become convinced that sophisticated knowledge about the world is pointless because 'there is nothing you can do' and 'things will never change'. But suddenly, in a revolution, they find themselves in the saddle. Workers are called upon to control and direct everything in society. Everything seems possible and they want to know everything.

The task of the workers' state will be to create an education system that will foster and develop this desire to learn. That system will be the opposite of the present capitalist education system which absorbs eager and curious five-year-olds and spews them out 11 years later, bitter and cynical.

What really devastates and distorts education at present is not just the lack of funding, serious though that is, but the state of war 'now hidden, now open' that exists between teachers and pupils. This in turn derives from the role of schools under capitalism which is to reproduce the class structure of society. Schools progressively sift out those destined for middle class and ruling class positions (this is the real function of examinations) and prepare the rest for exploitation and alienated labour. A system whose structure inevitably condemns the majority to failure cannot possibly retain the enthusiasm and cooperation of its victims-no matter how well-meaning individual teachers may be. The only way it can operate is by authoritarian imposition.

In contrast socialist education will be equipping everyone, not just the select few, to take an active, planning and administrative role. Its goal will

be the all round development of the human personality.

Schools will be collaborative, not competitive. It will no longer be 'cheating' for one student to help another. And they will be democratic and not autocratic. The dictatorial rule of the head will give way to the elected school council made up of representatives of the students, staff and the workers' councils. Teachers will be the helpers, in a sense the servants, of their students. Discipline will be collective rather than imposed.

Those who imagine this will lead to a breakdown of all order are ignorant of what goes on in most contemporary classrooms and totally underestimate the power of peer group pressure which wins out over detention and the cane any day.

As the working week is steadily reduced and the more arduous jobs are increasingly automated, so education will become something that does not cease at 16, 18 or 21.

It will continue as a lifelong process, ever more closely linked to the solution of practical tasks and problems thrown up by the new society.

What is true of education will also be true of culture generally.

Post-revolutionary society will produce a great flowering of the arts by providing artists with a multitude of new and inspiring themes. It will also throw up a new audience for art as a part of the overall awakening of personality that will occur when the working class moves from the wings of society to the centre of the stage.

Undoubtedly music, painting, poetry, drama, cinema and the rest will all have a role to play both in the revolutionary struggle itself and in the building of socialism. But neither the workers' state nor the revolutionary party will attempt to dictate to or control the creative arts. There will be no repetition of the disastrous Stalinist policy of proscribing particular artistic forms or claiming that only one style of art – either so called 'socialist realism' or any other – has validity. Apart from reserving the right to prohibit direct counter-revolutionary propaganda, the revolutionary government will promote the maximum freedom in this area. Without vigorous criticism, debate, experiment and the rivalry of different schools, artistic development is impossible.

Obviously it is impossible to predict or lay down in advance the precise nature of the art of the future. However, I think it is possible to forecast in

general terms a fundamental change in the relationship between art and society.

Capitalist society, with its division of mental and manual labour, its fragmentation and alienation, gives rise to a separation of art and the artist from the mass of people on the one hand, and from productive work on the other. Moreover, both these separations reinforce each other. Art becomes a privileged arena in which the minority express themselves creatively while the majority are condemned to mechanical, non-expressive, non-creative labour. Art, reflecting society's division into classes, divides into 'high art' and low art'. The 'high' artist becomes a member of an elite, administering to an elite.

Socialism will overcome these separations, not by forcing artists to be 'popular', or even simply by raising the cultural level of the majority – though this will happen of course. Rather socialism will make all work a creative activity, so that every producer becomes in a sense an artist. Likewise the skills of painting, design, architecture, writing – of all the art forms – will become integral elements in the collective work of shaping the human environment.

Just as the producer becomes an artist, so the artist will become a producer.

10. From necessity to freedom

The ultimate goal of Marxism, of socialism, and of the struggle of the working class is freedom. The bourgeoisie are, of course, keen to proclaim their commitment to freedom: freedom of speech, of the press, of the individual to do what they please with their money and so on. They know full well that as long as they control the means of production and therefore the wealth, the media, and the state, these freedoms remain enormously restricted and almost meaningless for the vast majority. They know also that they have the power to limit or indeed trample on such freedoms whenever they find it necessary.

In contrast Marxists recognise that in a society divided into antagonistic classes, founded on exploitation and ruled by capital, there are and can be no 'absolute' freedoms. We expose the sham abstract freedom offered by the bourgeoisie because what we want is real concrete freedom.

Freedom from hunger and poverty (without which all other freedoms mean nothing), freedom from war, from endless toil, from exploitation, from racial and sexual oppressions – these are the real freedoms we fight for. They can be made a reality only by establishing the positive freedom of the working class to run society.

However, in the course of achieving this the working class also paves the way for a freedom of which the bourgeoisie has never dreamt, namely freedom to live without the supervision of the state.

It is commonly alleged that Marxists believe in the state. The opposite is the case. We are opponents of the state.

The state by its very nature is an instrument of domination and oppression – a means by which one section of the population forcibly holds down another. States cannot be other than institutions of violence. Essentially, as Engels put it, they consist of 'bodies of armed men'. People bear arms either to kill other people or to force them to do things against their will, that is to deprive them of their freedom.

All this applies to the new workers' state emerging out of the successful revolution just as it does to the capitalist state. There is a difference of course. The capitalist state is an instrument for maintaining the exploitation of the many by the few. The workers' state will be an instrument of the majority for suppressing the minority of exploiters.

Nevertheless, even at its most democratic the workers' state remains an institution which limits human freedom in various ways. Indeed, even though the workers' state represents and involves the majority of the working class, it not only suppresses the old ruling class but also places certain restrictions on the freedom of the working class itself.

The workers' state is a weapon of class war and waging war means not only attacking the enemy but disciplining your own forces, just as a picket line is a weapon of struggle against the employers which operates by disciplining backward workers.

This is why there can be no talk of complete freedom – of freedom for all – until even the workers' state has been dismantled. And this has always been the ultimate objective of Marxists, repeatedly reaffirmed by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

However, there is no Marxist proposition that has been so consistently dismissed as utopian as that of the withering away of the state. So let us examine the arguments.

First let us be clear that Marxists do not suggest that the state can be dispensed with immediately (that is the anarchist view), but only on the basis of certain preconditions. These have been dealt with earlier in this pamphlet: the international victory of the socialist revolution and the total defeat of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie; the abolition of the root of all exploitation and class divisions; the achievement of material abundance in which goods are distributed according to need.

In these circumstances the state will have lost its essential functions. There will be no oppressor class to defend and no oppressed class to hold down. Nor with world socialism will there be national (or imperialist) interests to assert or foreign interests to combat.

What about crime and managing the economy, the sceptic will ask.

In a fully socialist society crime will, to all intents and purposes, disappear, not because under socialism everyone will become 'good' or

morally perfect, but because the motives and opportunity for crime will be removed.

Let us illustrate the general case with the example of one of the most common forms of crime, car theft. An advanced socialist society will probably resolve the problem of transport in one of two ways. Either every individual will be supplied with adequate and equal means of transport, or public transport will be raised to the level where personal transport is unnecessary. In either case the market for stolen cars and the motive for stealing them will both have gone, and what applies to cars will eventually apply to all goods.

This leaves the question of crimes against the person – assaults, murders, sexual crimes and such like. These are already a small proportion of crime and a non-competitive socialist society which cares equally for all its members will undoubtedly reduce them greatly. What anti-social behaviour remains will best be dealt with by collective organisations of local communities. It will not require the state.

As for running the economy, it should be said that in the last analysis it is economies that run states, not vice versa. In so far as state management of the economy has greatly increased in the modern world this is for two reasons: to try (unsuccessfully) to mitigate the internal contradictions of capitalism; and to organise the forces of national capitalisms in competition with others.

With socialism both these requirements will cease.

Thus in the socialist society of the future the state will wither away and this will mark the disappearance of the last vestige of the terrible legacy of class society, and the final completion of humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom – which is the essence of socialism.

1. [The Future Socialist Society](#)
2. [Marxists Internet Archive](#)
3. [Introduction](#)
4. [1. The conquest of political power](#)
5. [2. Repression and freedom under workers' power](#)
6. [3. The conquest of economic power](#)
7. [4. Spreading the revolution: the international dimension](#)
8. [5. Producing for need: towards abundance](#)
9. [6. The transformation of work](#)
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