

Marxist Theory

Kavita Krishnan And A Fresh Discussion Within The Indian Left

Friday 11 November 2022, by [CHATTOPADHYAY Kunal](#) (Date first published: 1 November 2022).

Kavita Krishnan, till recently a Politbureau member of the CPI(ML) Liberation, and one of the most well-known individual faces on the far left, as well as among feminist circles, has resigned from the CPI(ML). This was connected to her views about the former Soviet Union, as well as questions she raises about socialism and democracy.

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Part I — Socialist Construction, Stalinism, Anti-Fascism And Liberal Democracy

Kavita Krishnan, till recently a Politbureau member of the CPI(ML) Liberation, and one of the most well-known individual faces on the far left, as well as among feminist circles, has resigned from the CPI(ML). This was connected to her views about the former Soviet Union, as well as questions she raises about socialism and democracy. Serious charges have been levelled against her. This short essay will not be able to take up all the issues that may require adequate treatment. However, some things need to be argued from the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism. We do so, starting with expressing our solidarity with her against the trolling and offensive attacks she has been facing. While we have our own views, we also seek to engage in a serious discussion, without an a priori closure that declares her some kind of a ‘deviationist’ or a ‘class traitor’ or uses other hostile epithets, which do not allow serious discussions to develop.

Kavita Krishnan in her own words:

The meat of Krishnan’s original public statement consisted of these points:

1. The need to recognise the importance of defending liberal democracies with all their flaws against rising forms of authoritarian and majoritarian populisms not just in India but around the world.
2. The need to recognise that it is not enough to discuss the Stalin regime, USSR, or China as failed

socialisms but as some of the world's worst authoritarianisms that serve as a model for authoritarian regimes everywhere.

3. The conviction that for our fight for democracy against fascism and growing totalitarianism in India to be consistent, we must acknowledge the entitlement to the same democratic rights and civil liberties for all people across the world, including subjects of socialist totalitarian regimes past and present.

In a subsequent Facebook post, she elaborated on these in the following way [some sentences are omitted, but I hope none that she feels are core arguments. Otherwise the text is as she wrote it, apart from minor spelling and punctuation editing]:

"This shouldn't need saying, it's obvious, but I'm saying it anyway because I see some (well-meaning) people are getting it wrong: When I speak of the "importance of defending liberal democracies with all their flaws" I am NOT talking of capitalist liberal democracies as the best and final form of government.

1) Capitalism requires a political form and a society with a degree of formal freedom - and that is why it has till now favoured parliamentary democracies. This may be changing, of course: capitalism is aware of the benefits of totalitarianism in Russia, or China, and may well favour such forms elsewhere as well. Indian capitalists favoured Modi's majoritarian "Gujarat model" and still do. But to the extent that capitalism needs formal democracy — the working classes, ordinary people and of course the revolutionary left and democratic movements use that democratic form to the fullest to build their own strength and wrest rights and protections and entitlements from a reluctant state. It also does its best to expand and strengthen and deepen that democracy — to extend it beyond the formal constitutional word on paper to reach the lives of real people including the poor and oppressed for whom those formal freedoms and protections are usually out of reach.

2) Today even those formal liberal democracies are in danger — in India and the world over — from authoritarian and majoritarian populisms and it's from THESE that I've spoken of defending democracies....

3) The Modi regime wants to keep the constitutional parliamentary form — but empty it of all meaningful content and turn it for all purposes into a Hindu supremacist totalitarian state which is "opposition-free", "one party", "one Leader", "one language", "one culture" (i.e., Brahminical Hindu North Indian culture), "one ideology", "one election" etc. We're all resisting this together. All I'm saying is — we have to support people all over the world who are doing the same; that includes Americans building resistance to and seeking to strengthen democratic institutions against Trumpist fascism; and Ukrainians fighting against Russian fascist invasion which threatens democracy all over Europe and in fact, the world. The left shouldn't keep thinking that US imperialism is the sole or even the main danger in the world today. It must recognise that Putin-ruled Russia (which has puppet or client governments in former Soviet colonies and wants the same in Ukraine, backed Trump and meddled in US elections, funded pro-Brexit far-right forces in the UK). Xi-ruled China which backs the brutal and genocidal military rulers in Myanmar, is a Han-nationalist regime "with socialist rhetoric", and places entire Uyghur Muslim populations in concentration camps; and Modi-ruled India, Bolsonaro-ruled Brazil are a danger to the world. Alliances between these powers (Russia, China and India are holding joint military exercises as we speak) can change the "balance of power" in the world, and NOT in a good way. Russian fascists have long theorised that these three nations represent civilizational empires that ought to be able to rule in keeping with "cultural nationalism", imperialism and fascism boldly — without having to answer to liberal democracies and institutions like UN on "human rights" and other concepts they mock and jeer at. To this nightmarish spectre of Putin, Xi and Modi in alliance, add one of a US ruled by Putin's and Modi's

best pal Trump who also has huge business interests in China. There is a real danger of “balance of power” in the world truly changing to make such a nightmare come true, surely the first priority ought to be to prevent it?

4) Fascisms have been born out of liberal democracies - in part due to inherent weaknesses of such democracies. We’ve seen that in India. But even so, no serious anti-fascist in India would equate the Modi regime with governments ruled by Congress and other parties, even when we know the latter designed and enacted many of the draconian laws and undemocratic practices that the fascists wield with such glee today.

5) As we defend and seek to strengthen and shore up democracies in India and other countries, we have to face the fact that “socialisms” as they’ve existed and exist today have been deeply authoritarian and totalitarian. They’ve violated the principles of civil liberties, democratic rights we defend today as completely as any fascist could — and probably for longer periods of time. In my interview with Mathrubhumi (linked in endnotes)[\[1\]](#) I’ve discussed some of the reasons for this.

My point is, any “socialism” we fight for has to be a better and more consistent democracy than the ones in capitalist liberal democracies. As I put it to my friends, with apologies to Emma Goldman who said she didn’t want a revolution that had no dancing, I don’t want a revolution without, say, habeas corpus (look it up if you don’t know, it means the citizen is protected from arbitrary arrest and incarceration by the state). In fact, any revolution which violates habeas corpus ought to be unthinkable and there ought to be all kinds of protections for it. The same for, say, the right to privacy and so on. The socialist state ought not to be a totalising state with total power concentrated in it — just because its intentions are good doesn’t mean citizens don’t need protection from the power of socialist states.

6) The argument for socialist totalitarianisms has always been — “but they lifted countries out of absolute poverty, hunger and so on”. My answer to that is that indeed food, housing, education, health and so on, are as much democratic rights and the foundations of human freedom as civil liberties. But you can’t justify crushing the latter in exchange for the former. As I argue in Fearless Freedom, you can’t take away liberty in the name of security; likewise you can’t take away liberty in the name of feeding and clothing and housing people. Daily bread is necessary — but so is the daily “Bread of Justice”, to quote Brecht. “

On the Russian/Soviet Question - Our Views

In view of the fact that Krishnan uses the term socialist totalitarianism, there is a vital need to clarify matters about the USSR. Historically, the overwhelming majority of those calling themselves communists, in India as well as in other parts of the world, identified themselves with the victors of the inner-party struggles in the CPSU. This is true of those who set on a reformist path long back, those who still see “Protracted Peoples’ War” as the line, as well as those who have been trying to find alternatives to these two poles. Consequently, for them, there is no such entity as Stalinism, distinct from Bolshevism. This leads to the conclusion, inevitably, that socialism had indeed been constructed in the USSR, and mutatis mutandis, in China and other countries. If there were problems, if tortures, killings, had at all existed, they can be explained away by the apologists as lies, or as necessary steps to protect socialism from imperialism.

In recent times, Krishnan, and the CPI(ML) Liberation as a whole, had been bucking this trend in connection with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Those who are often called “tankies” are willing to

remain silent about Putin's vilification of Lenin and the Bolshevik principle of the right of nations to self-determination, as long as Putin appears as an opponent of US imperialism. These are the last, dying, yet protracted embers of the doctrine that only US imperialism and its allies are "evil". This has led many on the left to discover unlikely anti-imperialist heroes, including in Putin and Assad. This has led people to condemn Syrian rebels against Assad. To the credit of Krishnan, she tried to probe deeper into the history of the USSR. And this led her to conclude that the Soviet nationalities policy under Stalin was very different from what Lenin had proclaimed. Putin of course admitted as much in his speech when he condemned Lenin but said that Stalin had de facto reversed the policy, while keeping the formal shell there.[\[iii\]](#)

But as long as Krishnan, or the CPI(ML), on whose behalf she had written those earlier statements and articles, remained stuck within the binary of Socialism vs Social Imperialism, there was bound to be a major problem.

A social analysis of the USSR cannot be carried out in abstraction but must be situated historically. From 1921, there had emerged oppositional currents questioning the idea that the workers' state was marching directly to socialism. During the last period of free inner-party debates in 1921, the Workers' Opposition raised serious questions about whether the dictatorship of the proletariat could exist without proper Soviet democracy. In 1922, Lenin took up a battle against the growing party bureaucracy, with the oppression of national minorities in Georgia and elsewhere, as one of the principal immediate issues. By the time a stroke ended his political life, close to a year before the termination of life itself, he had identified Stalin as a key target demanding his removal as General Secretary. But the very fact that one individual could amass so much power in his hands pointed to more serious systemic problems.

This would be taken up by the Left Opposition, led by Lev (Leon) Trotsky, Iuri Piatakov, Christian Rakovsky, Evgenii Preobrazhenskii and others. Under pressure of proletarian Petrograd (Leningrad), a section of the emerging bureaucratic layer broke with the system for a time and Zinoviev, Kamenev and their allies formed an alliance with the Left, to form the United Opposition. But by this time, even inner party democracy was dead, and the Platform of the Opposition was not printed, though they were still members of the party, several of them still members of the Central Committee. Instead, adhering to opposition views was declared incompatible with party membership.

This would be followed by Stalin's sudden swing, the rapid forced collectivization, the over-ambitious five year plans, and all within a bureaucratic command system that ensured increasingly skewed distribution, as well as decision making that came only from the top in a thoroughly undemocratic way.

Leon Trotsky, in summing up and carrying forward the analysis of the Left Opposition in the 1930s, wrote a number of essays, and the book *The Revolution Betrayed*. There are shifts, which we cannot discuss in this short essay. Prior to 1933-34, Trotsky used the analogy with "Thermidor" (the reactionary aftermath of the French Revolution) to understand a class overturn. He, and his comrades, had thought in terms of a capitalist overturn. Since within Russia the only significant capitalist class was the rich peasantry or the kulaks, this had led Trotsky and his co-thinkers to identify, even to specific personnel (and correctly) by 1926 that part of the party leadership they saw as the Right. They assumed that the policies of Rykov and the ideological positions of Bukharin would lead to capitalist restoration. Realising the problem of charging an old Bolshevik like Bukharin with direct accusations of 'restorationism', they in fact suggested that restoration would be a consequence of their policies not their intentions. The key debate was the nature of Soviet economic growth, especially its industrialization policy.

The description of the Stalinist faction as “centrist” was meant to signify the incapacity of this group to operate on its own behalf. In the same way, Trotsky saw the bureaucracy as emerging from the working class, first by functional separation, but then by using political power to consolidate its privileges. The centrists lacked a definitive social base in class relations and would, by turns, be drawn towards the left and proletarian policies and then towards the right, reflecting the pressure of bourgeois interests.

After 1933-34, there was a shift. Trotsky now recognised that the bureaucracy itself was the principal opponent of the working class for a long period to come. He now introduced the idea of a political counter-revolution, which led to no basic change in the social basis of the revolution but pulled politics to the conservative side. He argued that the bureaucracy had emerged from the working class, and had carried out a political counter-revolution, but had as yet not fully overturned the social gains of the October Revolution.

The strengths of his use of the analogy need to be underscored. First, this meant that counter-revolution would clothe itself in the dress of the revolution. Second, in this analysis, he saw how a revolutionary upsurge is followed by a downturn, the resulting withdrawal of the broad masses from active revolutionary politics, which in turn feeds into the ability of the bureaucracy to take and consolidate power.

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky summed up the class nature of the bureaucracy. He argued that it was not a new class. Nor was it state capitalism. Rather, it was a privileged layer, which if it continued to consolidate its privileges, would inevitably want to move from privileges in consumption and distribution to control and ownership over the means of production.

[For the sake of brevity, I reproduce only one section of his much longer analysis—KC]

"In order better to understand the character of the present Soviet Union, let us make two different hypotheses about its future. Let us assume first that the Soviet bureaucracy is overthrown by a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism, enriched moreover by the world experience of the recent period. Such a party would begin with the restoration of democracy in the trade unions and the Soviets. It would be able to, and would have to, restore freedom of Soviet parties. Together with the masses, and at their head, it would carry out a ruthless purgation of the state apparatus. It would abolish ranks and decorations, all kinds of privileges, and would limit inequality in the payment of labour to the life necessities of the economy and the state apparatus. It would give the youth free opportunity to think independently, learn, criticize and grow. It would introduce profound changes in the distribution of the national income in correspondence with the interests and will of the worker and peasant masses. But so far as concerns property relations, the new power would not have to resort to revolutionary measures. It would retain and further develop the experiment of planned economy. After the political revolution – that is, the deposing of the bureaucracy – the proletariat would have to introduce in the economy a series of very important reforms, but not another social revolution.

If – to adopt a second hypothesis – a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats, administrators, technicians, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general. A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party. The chief task of the new power would be to restore private property in the means of production. First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the development of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries

and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual “corporations” – potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the émigré former proprietors and foreign capitalists. Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new regime would have to introduce in the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution.

Let us assume to take a third variant – that neither a revolutionary nor a counterrevolutionary party seizes power. The bureaucracy continues at the head of the state. Even under these conditions social relations will not jell. We cannot count upon the bureaucracy’s peacefully and voluntarily renouncing itself in behalf of socialist equality. If at the present time, notwithstanding the too obvious inconveniences of such an operation, it has considered it possible to introduce ranks and decorations, it must inevitably in future stages seek supports for itself in property relations. One may argue that the big bureaucrat cares little what are the prevailing forms of property, provided only they guarantee him the necessary income. This argument ignores not only the instability of the bureaucrat’s own rights, but also the question of his descendants. The new cult of the family has not fallen out of the clouds. Privileges have only half their worth, if they cannot be transmitted to one’s children. But the right of testament is inseparable from the right of property. It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class. On the other hand, the victory of the proletariat over the bureaucracy would insure a revival of the socialist revolution. The third variant consequently brings us back to the two first, with which, in the interests of clarity and simplicity, we set out.”[\[iii\]](#)

The Labour Bureaucracy and the Stalinist Bureaucracy - Ernest Mandel’s Contribution

This analysis would be further elaborated, notably by Ernest Mandel. His most detailed study in this regard was the book *Power and Money*. Mandel goes back to Rosa Luxemburg and to Marx’s own conception. For Marx and Engels, ‘the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves’. Yet the historical reality is that the working class cannot, as a whole, be permanently active in the class struggle. It is only in unusual situations, in situations we call pre-revolutionary or revolutionary, that the entire, or even bulk, of the working class engages in strikes, mass demonstrations, mass offensives, because the working class is separated from the means of production and in order to survive, must sell their labour power. Most of the time, different segments of the working class become active in the struggle against capitalism at different times.

In the wake of successful mass struggles, only a minority of the workers remain consistently active. Most of this “workers’ vanguard”—the layer of workers who “even during a lull in the struggle...does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle but continues the war ‘by other means’”. — preserves and transmits to newer workers the traditions of mass struggle in the workplace or the community. However, a minority of this “militant minority”, together with middle class intellectuals who have access to cultural skills from which the bulk of the working class is excluded, must take on responsibility for administering the unions or political parties created by periodic upsurges of mass activity. Mandel recognized that “the development of mass political or trade-union organizations is inconceivable without an apparatus of full-timers and functionaries.” But he also saw in this what he called the “dialectics of partial conquest”. Trade unions and parties have the potential to form an apparatus, that in times of lull between peaks of the class struggle, get an autonomous life of their own. Those workers who become officials of the unions and political parties begin to experience conditions of life very different from those who remain in the workplace. The new officials find

themselves freed from the daily humiliations of the capitalist labour process. They are no longer subject to either deskilled and alienated labour or the petty-despotism of supervisors. Trade union officials try to make that position permanent, and to set extra privileges.

The consolidation of such labour bureaucracies are intensified during periods when upturns in the long waves of capitalist development make it possible for considerable sections of workers to have gains in their wages and living conditions without incessant and massive struggles (not without any struggles, but their scale, breadth and depth go down). In such situations, the organisations find a 'stability' which involves lasting structures, full timers, some privileges, and protecting the organisation becomes an end in itself. Election campaigns, parliamentary lobbying, and tightly controlled, top-down forms of union negotiations replace the self-organisation and self-activity of the masses.

Reformism was an outgrowth of this labour bureaucracy, sticking to electoralism and limited collective bargaining, fearful that mass revolutionary action might threaten the stability of the organisation. This has led to serious consequences for the working class -since reformism ignores "the structural character of the basic relations of production and of political and social class power". During revolutionary and pre-revolutionary crises, (e.g., Italy in 1920, Germany during 1918-1923, Spain and France in 1936-37), the social-democratic and (from 1935) Stalinist parties successfully disorganized the workers' struggles and organizations (workers' councils, factory committees, etc.) in the name of preserving bourgeois democracy and the past conquests of the workers' movement.

Is bureaucratization then inevitable? Mandel does not argue that. He certainly makes the case that reformism cannot be willed away, that it has structural roots and will continue to be a problem till capitalism is overthrown. But in his significant work, *The Leninist Theory of Organisation*, Mandel elaborated how the class struggle concretely develops the working class vanguard, a much broader layer than the party(ies), and certainly well beyond the small groups portraying themselves as THE party.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International began a process of transformation of the bulk of the Communist Parties. The new version of "United Front", which pushed for the inclusion of the non-fascist bourgeois forces in such a front, actually meant the subordination of working class independence. Contrary to Mandel's own optimism, this had a far more damaging result. When Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades in Russia, or Luxemburg, Liebknecht and their comrades in Germany, broke with the reformist leadership, they were confident that there was a mass radical working class vanguard cadre they could appeal to. Stalinist reformism in the capitalist countries, and the period of post-war 'long wave' of economic expansion, combined to finish that entire tradition of militancy.

Mandel's analysis of the labour bureaucracy also helps in understanding the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy. Both Trotsky and Mandel follow Marx in looking at a phase of transition between capitalism and socialism. I have argued this at length elsewhere^[iv]. But such a transition called for an expansion of the world revolution. In fact, in 1917-1923 there was a revolutionary upsurge over vast areas. But in the end capitalism prevailed, leaving the isolated Soviet state in a difficult, beleaguered position. Russia's pre-war economic backwardness was compounded by the destructive civil war—in which a big part of the vanguard working class that had made the October Revolution died, or was removed from the productive process, absorbed into urgent tasks to save the revolution with the already weak economy further destroyed by civil war. The failure of the German and Italian revolutions, above all due to the role of the Social Democrats, resulted in an intensification of the inherent contradictions of the transitional society of the USSR between socialized production and bourgeois norms of distribution.

The absence of material abundance and a large and concentrated proletariat meant the most important preconditions for socialist construction were not there. This enabled the condition for the growth of the Soviet bureaucracy. A layer of full-time state and party officials separate from the mass of workers emerged first to administer the distribution of scarce goods and services among the population. During the civil war, the number of state and party officials began to grow, as the Soviets requisitioned grain from the peasants to feed the urban workers and Red Army, and attempted to organize the shrinking state-owned industries for war production. The introduction of the New Economic Policy was essential, yet it also assisted the growth of the party and state bureaucracy with the revival of commodity production and circulation in both the cities and countryside. Through the purges, the Terror, the annihilation of all potential challengers to its power, especially from workers and peasants, this bureaucracy was able to create a relatively long period of its own rule, with vast material privileges. It was in and after 1991 that large sections of the bureaucracy turned categorically to the project of capitalist restoration, a process discussed, for example, in a resolution of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, one of our forerunner organisations.[\[v\]](#)

Trotsky briefly, and Mandel much more elaborately, also recognised that errors of the Bolsheviks had assisted the rise of the bureaucracy. Trotsky wrote that the ban on opposition parties “brought after it the prohibition of factions”. Mandel stressed the substitutionist elements in Lenin and Trotsky’s writings and work in 1920-21, when they would look at the party as the only force capable of building socialism. While both would start drawing back, it would only be in the 1930s that Trotsky would settle accounts with the past. And it would be Mandel who would respond most clearly to the question of the relationship between socialism and democracy. Not only would he be the principal drafter of the Fourth International’s resolution on Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. He would also take up seriously the matter of democratic planning.

Trotsky’s and Mandel’s positions have been assailed from other attempts at Marxist analysis, both “State Capitalism” and variants of “New Class” theories. There is no possibility of examining that here. We can cite Perry Anderson, who emphasized that Trotsky’s analysis “...provides a theory of the phenomenon of Stalinism in a long historical temporality, congruent with the fundamental categories of classical Marxism. At every point in his account of the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, Trotsky sought to situate it in the logic of successive modes of production and transitions between them, with corresponding class powers and political regimes, that he inherited from Marx, Engels or Lenin.....Because he could think of the emergence and consolidation of Stalinism in a historical time-span of this epochal character, he avoided the explanations of hasty journalism and improvised confections of new classes or modes of production, unanchored in historical materialism, which marked the reaction of many of his contemporaries”.[\[vi\]](#)

To take a position that says, Stalinist Russia, or Maoist China, serve as “models” for other authoritarianisms, is to ignore the social character of different regimes. In fact, it was the very instability of the bureaucracy, as a social layer but not a class rooted in the mode of production, that pushed it to so much brutal force. By all means communists must condemn it, must lay out a vision of socialist construction that rejects such violence, illegality, but that has to be one without lumping Stalinism with bourgeois right-wing forces and regimes.

The Temptations of Liberal Democracy

The memory of the democratic Soviets would disappear under an avalanche of Stalinist propaganda about why the “leading role” of the party was essential, why violation of basic human rights in the name of class struggle were legitimate. For the majority of those calling themselves communists,

there existed the polar opposites – capitalist rule and “working class rule” (exercised by the upper echelons of the party, implemented through the nomenklatura). Anyone who has lived under the over three decades of CPI(M) domination in West Bengal, however disguised under a wider Left Front banner, has experienced this on a small scale. As we have written in the past, just as hardened defenders of Stalinism would deny its wrongdoings, similarly hardened defenders in the CPI(M) would deny that the CPI(M) had done anything wrong, insisting that people turned against it only due to bourgeois and imperialist propaganda.

Of course there exists bourgeois propaganda. A key propaganda theme is the great value of liberal-democracy. As a matter of fact, liberal-democracy as a hyphenated reality did not exist till the twentieth century. While we cannot provide a country by country, in-depth survey, some basic data is instructive. The vote was not the sole issue. But it was an important one. Ellen Meiksins Wood points out correctly, that due to the significant separation of the economic and the political, only in capitalism can the ruling class accept a form of government where it is not directly governing. However, this is subject to the fundamental needs of the capitalist class, and as long as full separation of the direct producer from the means of production has not been achieved, this is unacceptable to capitalism. That is why, theorists have been unambiguous in early capitalism. When the Levellers debated the Army Grandees at Putney, a Leveller leader, Rainsborough, defending their demand for democracy, had said, “Really I think that the poorest he that is in England has a life to live as the greatest he; and therefore truly, sir, I think it’s clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government; and I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he has not had a voice to put himself under”.

To this, Oliver Cromwell’s ally Henry Ireton immediately objected, on the ground that this would put those who had property and those who did not have property on the same foundations. And when, decades later, it was again necessary for Shaftesbury and the Whigs to rope in a Leveller-like social force, Shaftesbury’s ideologue, John Locke, put it clearly enough – everyone had the right to resist tyranny, if the social contract was violated. But only those who were propertied had the right of express consent—i.e., the vote.

In 1832, the First Reform Act in UK broadened the franchise to include small landowners, tenant farmers and shopkeepers, and in the boroughs gave the vote to all householders who paid a yearly rental of 10 pounds, and to some lodgers. In other words, the entire working class was excluded. The result was a mass working class movement, the Chartist Movement. But the call for ‘manhood suffrage’, as well as the call for women’s suffrage, were resisted all out by the British Parliament. The 1867 Second Reform Act doubled the electorate, but still linked votes to property qualifications. The Third Reform Act of 1884 finally gave votes to around 60% of the men, but still excluded 40% men and all the women. It would be after World War I that all adult men aged 21 and over, and all women aged 30 or over got the vote. Equalisation of the ages for women took more years.

The French case was more complicated. Due to the historical memory of the Jacobin Republic and its great Constitution of the Year II, the demand for male suffrage would repeatedly come up. But it would also be turned into a plebiscitary distortion by Louis Bonaparte. After his fall, the Third Republic would have male suffrage, but this was a Republic set up over the blood and bones of the Communards of Paris, defeated with some assistance from Bismarck. So one can hardly see in this a liberal-democracy. Also, in the French case, women finally got the vote only after World War II.

In Germany, Bismarck introduced the male adult suffrage for the Reichstag, but not for the powerful Prussian provincial assembly. And it was the Social Democratic Party, especially its left-wing women leaders like Klara Zetkin, who fought for women’s suffrage. That suffrage would come only after a worker and soldier revolution had overthrown the Kaiser and the imperial system in 1918.

These dates need to be remembered. In 1917, the February Revolution overthrew the Tsar. Members of the Tsarist Duma, elected on a restricted franchise, who till a few days back had been opposing the revolution, now strutted forward, setting themselves up as the Provisional Government. They declared an election commission. But votes for women were ignored. On 19 March, 40,000 women marched demanding votes for women. A sidelight of this programme was, when the Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai tried to speak, liberal organisers of the march pushed her off the steps of the Tauride Palace. Bolsheviks would persist, however, and would organise women workers and the wives of soldiers. Given that by 1917, 43% of the labour force was female, the Bolshevik ascendancy in the Soviets also meant their increasingly strong base among women. And the October Revolution would be followed by a sweeping set of political, social, legal changes in favour of gender equality. That there was a later decay of the Russian Revolution cannot be denied. But it was the Russian Revolution that posed the question of full democracy, and Western liberalism responded only after that.

Krishnan however would appear to see the relationship in a different way. As quoted near the beginning of this essay, she argues that capitalism “requires a political form and a society with a degree of formal freedom — and that is why it has till now favoured parliamentary democracies.” We see things differently. As August Nimtz, Hal Draper, and others have argued, there was a distinct political current called The Democracy, in the 19th century, and Marx, Engels, and the Marxists played an important role in it. Historically, capitalism has existed in many forms, and not all parliamentary forms have been parliamentary democracies, as indicated above. Nor is it true that democracy has meant one and the same thing at all times. For all its class and gender limitation, *demokratia* in ancient Athens meant rule by the people in a real way. The *Ekklesia* or Assembly was the highest decision making body with a quorum of 6000 (in a citizen body originally assessed at 30,000). Mass law courts with *dikasts* (people who acted as judge and jury simultaneously) rather than specialist elite judges, were the norms. And it was only with armed force that this rule of the people could be smashed – once when a Spartan army tore their rights away in a bloody counter-revolution; and the second and final time, when the superior military force of Macedon ended the democracy. From the time of Plato, upper class intellectuals were hostile to the democracy, as historian Jennifer Tolbert Roberts records.[\[vii\]](#) It would be from the time of the American Revolution, when bourgeois leaders found a need to rope in people from the subordinate classes, that they agreed to something they called democracy. But the definition rapidly changed. In place of people actually ruling, liberal democracy limited the role of the “people” [the electorate] to voting periodically.

It would be argued that voting isn’t the only thing. Krishnan explicitly makes the point, when she talks about the Modi regime emptying the constitutional parliamentary form of all meaningful content. We would agree, but only up to a certain point. What we have to fight for is not something called liberal democracy. We have to fight for the elements of working-class democracy that two centuries of working class struggles have wrested periodically from the rulers. This of course means we need to fight fascism, and we need to make a distinction between the fascists and the other bourgeois forces.

However, Marx’s own views about bourgeois democracy and freedom do need to be considered when we fight. Marx did not make a counter-position between how much socialism and how much democracy. From his incomplete work on the critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, where he sought to show that “true democracy” needed a new content, namely communism, to his work on the Paris Commune, he shows consistent democracy in socialist terms, and consistent socialism in democratic terms, as Hal Draper put it. To provide one example of what this meant, when Marx turns to liberals and their versions of democracy he would consistently uphold complete freedom of

the press. One is aware of how this was totally destroyed under Stalinism (leading to a quip attributed to Trotsky, that “there is no Pravda (truth) in Izvestiya, and no Izvestiya (news) in Pravda”).

Counter-posing some real Liberal democracy to Modi on this field does not take us far. The controls over media stem from liberal democracy and the limits it imposes. When Liberals formed a government after the 1848 revolution in Prussia, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, edited by Marx, was to condemn the government for trying to use Penal Laws against “slander” to gag the press. Marx saw liberalism as not really establishing full democracy, but engaging in what he calls, even for the United States of his era, the “democratic swindle”. This implied the use of democratic forms to frustrate genuine democratic control from below. Time and again Marx or Engels analysed bourgeois-democratic politics as an exercise in convincing a maximum of the people that they were participating in state power, by means of a minimum of concessions to democratic forms.

Does this mean, that communists should be uninterested in democratic reforms? Not according to classical Marxism, though considerable parts of contemporary ultra-leftism does have some such belief. The point was clarified by Rosa Luxemburg a long time back. Revolutionary socialists are the best fighters for democratic reforms, —not because we seek to uphold bourgeois democracies but because the form of our fight against totalitarianism precisely exposes the limits of the capitalist democracies. We do not identify liberal democracy with fascism. But nor do we contrast them as polar opposites. Rather, we show how and why bourgeois authoritarianism in its entire spectrum finds its breeding ground in liberalism. When Trotsky talks about the Workers’ United Front against fascism, he too takes a similar approach. Before Hitler’s rise to power, Trotsky hammered away at the idea that the German Communist Party (KPD) must propose to the Social Democrats a joint struggle against Hitler and that Hitler’s victory would herald the complete smashing of the workers’ movement. A united struggle could, if timely, halt the Nazis and even enable the working class to move from a defensive to an offensive position. This was why, he did not see an alliance with liberals as a useful step even in the defensive battles. But this supposedly “broader” united front with liberals would be raised as the solution at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.

Anti-Fascism and Popular Frontism

What is not clear is whether this view that Popular Frontism must be the response to Anti-Fascism represents Krishnan’s main line of thinking. Are Trump, Putin, Modi and similar forces so much to the right of liberalism, that it is in the interests of the working class to defend liberal democracy against them? Also, how strongly does the CPI(ML) Liberation hold to this perspective given its political line – in West Bengal, in Bihar (where it is the strongest of the left parties who contest elections), and elsewhere. As the first draft of this essay was being written, there was news that CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya met Nitish Kumar in Delhi.

Once again, the lessons of history are not what those holding this binary opposition would like to read in them. The most extreme case is that of Germany. And German Social Democracy fought tooth and nail to preserve liberal democracy by liberal democratic means in Germany. But what Germany lacked, under that on paper truly democratic Weimar Constitution, was a liberal democratic partner that would collaborate with the SPD to uphold liberal democracy. A detailed study of parties, electorates, and party behaviour in parliaments show that it was not just the Nazi Party or the Monarchist-Right DNVP that was opposed to the democratic constitution. Brüning ruled for a considerable period with the help of an emergency provision and Presidential Decrees. Franz von Papen of the Catholic Center Party used the same provision to massively attack working class rights.

This did not make any of them fascists. But this did mean that defence of working-class rights could not be ensured by making parliamentary battles the priority and forging alliances with them. It is the same today. The Congress is not the BJP. But if we look at the laws that BJP has used, how many are rooted in Congress era laws? As a Radical Socialist resolution states in part: "In the specifically Indian context we need to realize that the old Congress hegemony has given way to a Hindutva hegemony mediated at the parliamentary level by the BJP. The BJP is the one bourgeois party that secures votes because of its programme. Other parties are cynical, and by programme mean little more than periodic electoral pledges, forgotten whether elected or defeated. More, they have all accepted soft Hindutva and neoliberalism. Thus, to call upon working people to vote for these parties in the name of halting BJP's road to power merely puts the revolutionary organization as an agent of unprincipled and degenerate bourgeois parties".

The resolution further states: "Rejection of both neoliberalism and Hindutva politics will then provide the necessary and sufficient preconditions for an anti-capitalist politics. To say that one must put anti-capitalism on the backburner because fighting Hindutva is the first task makes the working class subordinate to the bourgeois opposition. To ignore the specificities of Hindutva fascism by saying that all non-revolutionary parties are fascist (including calling or implying that the reformist left is "social fascist") is a horribly sectarian politics. But given the relative strengths between the reformist left and the far left even now, the main danger comes from not recognizing that revolutionary anti-capitalism must be highlighted. This has to reject illusions, such as green capitalism, bourgeois secularism, or bourgeois welfare statism as adequate safeguards. Only by building a strong revolutionary left can this fight be waged. Such a fight is not mainly electoral. But our electoral struggle cannot follow a path going in a direction opposite to our principal struggles."

We have been consistently arguing the following. Indian capitalism had begun a neoliberal turn at least from the beginning of Rajiv Gandhi's Prime Ministership, but pace gathered from 1990-91. The balance of payments crisis was used to ram through devastating pro-rich policies. The minority government of P.V. Narasimha Rao could do that only by threatening the left with the bogey of the BJP. A persistent policy of lesser evilism, of making a distinction between fighting class battles and fighting fascism, meant handling the Congress government with kid gloves. The result was a further massive growth of the BJP. In 1996 it won 161 seats, its allies a further 26. The Congress lost 7.5% votes and its seats came down from 232 to 140. What was significant through all those years was the grim determination of the parliamentary reformist left to hang on to "progressive" bourgeois allies. In 1996 this led to the United Front Government, which the CPI joined, and the CPI(M) and RSP supported. The economic policies of this government showed no difference. P. Chidambaram as its finance minister presented a budget that Indian capital hailed as a "dream budget".

This popular frontism cost the left heavily. Its last major opportunity in electoral terms had come in 2004, when it got 61 seats. But that was followed by the decision to give "support from outside" to UPA-I. But at what cost? Civil liberties were not extended. Natural justice was not promised to the victims of the Gujarat pogrom of 2002. The rights of Kashmiris remained as they had been - violated, trampled upon. The ideological offensive during the Vajpayee regime was not rolled back. Rather, Manmohan Singh played the old Congress game of balancing between extreme Right and the soft left, when he condemned in one breath "left fundamentalists" along with Hindutva fundamentalists.

Nor is it the case that the left took stronger positions over bread-and-butter issues. It has been a persistent failure of the left, to recognize that the strength of the left is primarily based on extra-parliamentary mobilizations. In the UPA-I period, the left seemed satisfied with the MNREGA, instead of fighting all out for the rights of workers and peasants and for even a partial roll back of neoliberalism.

Krishnan could say that this is not what she is intending. We hope so. But we argue that this is

indeed the logic of Popular Frontism, as laid down for India in the (in)famous Dutt-Bradley thesis, and as followed with variants by both the CPI(ML) Liberation and the more parliamentary embedded CPs. To fight fascism, two dimensions of struggle are needed. One, a deep-rooted ideological struggle, to counter the century long ideological offensive of Hindutva. Here, an alliance of different forces would create a parallelogram of forces in which the resultant would be shorter if the forces are too divergent. The second key dimension is the bid to forge a unity of all the exploited and oppressed. That would indeed be a united front. And it would certainly be important for the left to recognize that any attempt to impose a single party line, to ignore the voices from below, of Dalits, of Adivasis, of LGBTIQ+ forces, in the name of the authentic solution found by a self-declared vanguard, would damage the potential united front. The left can become a part of the leadership of such a front by demonstrating itself to be better, more consistent fighters. There can of course be periodic agreements with bourgeois parties for specific struggles (e.g., left and opposition bourgeois parties voting together against bills, etc). But these cannot be the principal focus of leftwing struggles against fascism. Above all, fascism is a force that on one hand has its autonomous agenda (in the Indian case aggressive Hindutva nationalism), but on the other hand carries out the agenda of the capitalist class.

Indian capitalism did not turn to the BJP as the party of its first choice. It did so because the old Congress hegemony has broken down, and this seemed the best option after all other options failed. There, the parties that are presenting themselves as liberal opponents of the BJP have strings tied to the capitalist class. That is why, defence of working class, defence of all the oppressed, and defence of their democratic rights can't be encapsulated by the slogan of defence of liberal democracy. If that is done, that is because one more key ideological feature of Stalinism, which it shares again with Menshevism and centrist Social Democracy (the Kautsky of the pre-1910 era) is the stage-ist conception of revolution. First achieve democracy. Then socialism. Going by Marx's conception of socialism and democracy discussed earlier, this does not fit in with classical Marxism. In the next part we will examine in greater details issues connected to this question.

Part II — 'Socialist' authoritarianism?

If defending liberal democracy against fascism was the key issue Krishnan wants to raise then it is not a sufficient marker of ideological difference from other left parties in India. Where she does indeed crucially differ from all variants of Stalinist or Stalinism derived leftism is in her rejection of the Stalin (and Mao) model(s) as worthy of emulation, her characterisation of the former definitely, and the latter implicitly, as authoritarian. This however, travels a path to a subsequent juncture many who have left the mainstream "communist politics have arrived, since the early 1930s if not earlier. Classical Marxism was categorical in asserting that socialism would have to be democratic. Marx's 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' stressed that American democracy (then one of the few examples of liberal democracy) was not true democracy because all were not included. For Marx, the human emancipation exemplifies the realisation of "true democracy". Thus: "Democracy is the resolved mystery to, all constitutions. Here the constitution not only in itself, according to essence, but according to existence and actuality is returned to its real ground, actual man, the actual people, and established as its own work."

At the same time, attacking Hegel's idea of the bureaucracy as a universal class, standing above particular interests in civil society, Marx characterised it as a pseudo-universal entity whose members disdainfully regard popular life as material to be manipulated in the pursuit of their own careers. In the Introduction to the Critique, written a few months later and the only part to be published in Marx's own lifetime, it is the proletariat that is identified as the universal class. Thus, the text that talks about the proletariat and communism is also the introduction to the text that lays

out Marx's idea of true democracy. Since a long narrative has gone into casting doubt about the writings of the early Marx, we only need to look at Marx on the Paris Commune, Engels on the same, and both of them on the draft programme of the united German workers' party (the draft of the Gotha Programme). In his magnificent description and analysis of the Paris Commune, Marx stressed its democratic character. In a speech on the anniversary of the International, Marx characterised the commune explicitly as a 'dictature' of the proletariat.^[viii] But for him, a dictatorship of the proletariat did not mean 'authoritarianism'. Certainly, it would use force against the bourgeoisie, which would not accept a majority verdict against it as if it was a football match and the referee had blown the final whistle. Defending the Commune's use of force, Marx wrote:

While the Versailles government, as soon as it had recovered some spirit and strength, used the most violent means against the Commune; while it put down the free expression of opinion all over France, even to the forbidding of meetings of delegates from the large towns; while it subjected Versailles and the rest of France to an espionage far surpassing that of the Second Empire; while it burned by its gendarme inquisitors all papers printed at Paris, and sifted all correspondence from and to Paris; while in the National Assembly the most timid attempts to put in a word for Paris were howled down in a manner unknown even to the Chambre introuvable of 1816; with the savage warfare of Versailles outside, and its attempts at corruption and conspiracy inside Paris - would the Commune not have shamefully betrayed its trust by affecting to keep all the decencies and appearances of liberalism as in a time of profound peace? Had the government of the Commune been akin to that of M. Thiers, there would have been no more occasion to suppress Party of Order papers at Paris than there was to suppress Communal papers at Versailles.^[ix]

Thus, Marx was pointing out that the Commune was moderate (perhaps excessively) even while suppressing armed opponents and their supporters. At the same time, he described the Commune in terms that left no doubts about its democratic character.

Paris could resist only because, in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army, and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.

Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workman's wage. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. ^[x]

And further:

In a rough sketch of national organization, which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communities of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to

send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the mandat impératif (formal instructions) of his constituents. The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged by Communal and thereafter responsible agents.

The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by Communal Constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence.

While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well-known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchical investiture.[\[xi\]](#)

So the mature Marx, who would draw the lesson of the Commune to emphasize the necessity of a change in the Communist Manifesto, was as committed to democracy in working class rule as was the Young Marx, who has been airbrushed by ideologues of High Stalinism like Althusser. As Marx and Engels wrote in the 1872 introduction to the Manifesto:

One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.” (See [The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association](#), 1871, where this point is further developed.)[\[xii\]](#)

In their discussion of the programme of the German workers’ Party, they return to these issues. And when they do, they categorically differentiate their position from that of liberalism.

Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

Now the program does not deal with this nor with the future state of communist society.

Its political demands contain nothing beyond the old democratic litany familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people’s militia, etc. They are a mere echo of the bourgeois People’s party, of the League of Peace and Freedom. They are all demands which, insofar as they are not exaggerated in fantastic presentation, have already been realized. Only the state to which they belong does not lie within the borders of the German Empire, but in Switzerland, the United States, etc. This sort of “state of the future” is a present-day state, although existing outside the “framework” of the German Empire.[\[xiii\]](#)

So the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat has to be more democratic than liberal democracy. It has to have a firm programme of bringing all bureaucracy, military separation under control and overcome special military-bureaucratic apparatus by the people in arms and democratic control over all functionaries. This would be restated by Engels when he wrote his 1891 introduction

to Marx's work on the Commune.

This shattering of the former state power and its replacement by a new and really democratic state is described in detail in the third section of The Civil War. But it was necessary to dwell briefly here once more on some of its features, because in Germany particularly the superstitious belief in the state has been carried over from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even to many workers. According to the philosophical notion, "the state is the realization of the idea" or the Kingdom of God on earth, translated into philosophical terms, the sphere in which eternal truth and justice is or should be realized. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes roots the more readily as people from their childhood are accustomed to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after otherwise than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the state and its well-paid officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinary bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in hereditary monarchy and swear by the democratic republic. In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and at best an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worst sides the proletariat, just like the Commune, cannot avoid having to lop off at the earliest possible moment, until such time as a new generation, reared in new and free social conditions, will be able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap-heap.

Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.[\[xiv\]](#)

This clarity of perception would be diluted over time, especially as the German Social Democratic Party won major electoral victories as well as wrested economic concessions under Bismarck as well as the post-Bismarck Imperial Germany. Karl Kautsky, in recent times again hailed as a champion of left-wing forces, wrote:

The democratic-proletarian method of battle may appear more monotonous than the revolutionary period of the bourgeoisie; it is certainly less dramatic and striking, but it calls for far fewer sacrifices. This may be somewhat disappointing to those smart literary persons who come to Socialism as an interesting sport, looking for interesting stuff, but not to those who actually have to do the fighting.

These so-called peaceful methods of conducting the class struggle, which are confined to non-military measures (parliamentarism, strikes, demonstrations, the press and similar methods of bringing pressure to bear) stand a chance of being maintained in any country the more democratic the institutions, and the greater the political and economic insight and the self control of the people.[\[xv\]](#)

In other words, while Kautsky differentiated himself from the right-wing of the party by insisting on the need for a working class revolution, he insisted that the revolution would follow "peaceful methods". Such an assumption would eventually lead to his argument in a later work, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1918), that "The antagonism of the two Socialist movements is not based on small personal jealousies: it is the clashing of two fundamentally distinct methods, that of democracy and that of dictatorship. Both movements have the same end in view: to free the proletariat, and with it humanity, through Socialism. But the view taken by the one is held by the other to be erroneous and likely to lead to destruction".[\[xvi\]](#)

Does this mean, that because Kautsky was a political degenerate by 1918, that we must uncritically

side with the Bolsheviks? And if we criticise them in any way, are we arguing that Bolshevism automatically led to Stalinism? Neither is correct. A proletarian revolution did occur. It will take a full-length essay to argue why it was more democratic. For now I refer readers to an earlier article of mine.[\[xvii\]](#) However, not only the monarchists, and the liberals (mainly under the political leadership of the Kadet Party and the military command of former generals and other officers of the tsarist army and navy), but also the biggest non-Bolshevik socialist party, the Socialist Revolutionary Party, as well as a good part of the Mensheviks, joined hands to wage an armed struggle to overthrow the rule of the Soviets. Even left-wing Mensheviks like Martov walked out of the Congress of Soviets rather than accept the working-class seizure of power. A civil war is not the best situation in which workers' democracy can be fully worked out. And well before the Bolsheviks had thought of the least bit of Red Terror, a left social democratic, almost Kautskyian experiment was carried out on the borders of Soviet Russia.

Revolution, Liberal Social Democratic Illusions and White Terror in Finland

In Finland, which even under the Tsar had autonomy, and considerable freedom for political parties, a Social Democratic Party had existed. On paper the SDP claimed to be orthodox, revolutionary Marxist. This claim has been revived in recent times by Eric Blanc. In fact the party was beset by Kautskyist illusions. As just one example, at their August 1906 congress, they denounced armed struggle and ordered the Red Guards to disband on the pretext that they would be a threat to the legality of the party.

The majority of the leadership firmly believed that they could bring about socialism peacefully through parliament while preserving the trappings of liberal democracy, while leftists like Kuusinen would seek to paper over cracks, acting in typical centrist manner. When World War I broke out in 1914, the Russian tsar sent 100,000 soldiers to Finland. Parliament was suspended and both censorship and restrictions on the right to assemble were introduced. Under Nicholas II, there had been a campaign of Russification, which revived and fanned the flames of Finnish nationalism. This pushed sections of the Finnish bourgeois and petty-bourgeois into the willing arms of German imperialism, who cynically posed as friends of the Finnish people, as enlightened liberators against the tyranny of tsarist autocracy – a position the German social democrats also shamefully adopted.

However, wartime demand for Finnish exports to tsarist Russia meant not only that there was practically no unemployment but also that the Finnish big industrial capitalists were making huge profits. This landed them objectively in the camp of Russian imperialism, in order to defend their own position. Despite tsarist oppression, the Finnish industrial capitalists were loyal above all to their own narrow class interests. So it was the working class alone that could fight for Finnish independence. The SDP, with over 51000 members, was a strong force. It opposed the war, and sent representatives to the Zimmerwald Conference, where however it stayed with the pacifist, Kautskyist wing rather than the Zimmerwald Left.

Soon after the February Revolution, the Finnish working class went on strike. The workers set up a Red Guard. With the Finnish army dissolved and the Russian army and navy in revolution, there was no organised counter-revolutionary force. A Helsinki Soviet tried to take power. But the SDP rejected this path. Instead of forming a workers' government, the SDP entered into a coalition with the bourgeois parties. Only two in the leadership voted against, including Otto Kuusinen. The new senate was led by Antti Tokoi from the SDP and consisted of six socialists and six bourgeois politicians. It soon issued appeals against "anarchy" and in favour of "order." During the summer a party congress of the SDP again saw a struggle between the left and right wings of the party. The left-wing proposals to push for a general strike were defeated, and instead the party adopted Finnish

independence with a liberal-democratic parliament as its main programmatic goal. In the 1913 Diet, the SDP and the Agrarian Party (championing peasant interests) together had a majority. Under Kerensky, Russian troops dissolved that diet. Fresh elections saw the SDP getting 92 seats out of 200, but the bourgeois parties held the majority. Later, ample evidence would be unearthed that the voting had been heavily rigged against the SDP. The SDP denounced the elections but went along with them.

The bourgeoisie, increasingly alarmed by the growing revolutionary mood, began organising their counteroffensive. After the fall of the tsar and the disorganisation of the tsarist army, the first White Guard in history was openly formed in Finland, the "Protection Guards," to ensure that so-called "law and order" were maintained. Right-wing militias had secretly begun training around the country. During a meeting in the Stock House in Helsinki, representatives of the ruling class decided to allocate huge sums of money for these purposes. In addition, on 31 October, the Whites received a big shipment of guns from Germany.

Soon after, the Russian Revolution meant the Finnish bourgeoisie no longer had Kerensky as a protector. They used their newly won and illegitimate parliamentary majority to move towards a dictatorship, with the reactionary Pehr Evind Svinhufvud at its head.

The workers responded with a general strike and established a Revolutionary Central Council to serve as its leadership. They immediately sent representatives to meet with the Bolshevik leaders in Russia, and Lenin urged them to take power. The day they returned to Finland with this revolutionary message, the strike began. The night before, workers had received guns from Russian troops, and in mass demonstrations on the first day, 3,000 armed workers marched through the streets.

The Whites represented just a handful of the population and did not have sufficient time to prepare for the mass upsurge. In contrast, the entire Finnish workers' movement was mobilised in the streets, ready to respond enthusiastically to a call to establish a workers' state.

Power was within reach. What was necessary was a leadership. But on the fourth day of the strike, a motion to take power was just barely defeated in the Revolutionary Central Council by a vote of eight against eight - with the Chairman casting the decisive vote.

On 6 December, the Finnish parliament declared that Finland was independent, which was soon recognised by the Bolshevik government, in keeping with Lenin's repeated insistence on the right of nations to self-determination all the way to independence.

The revolutionary wave spread, including among the peasants, who began to draw the conclusion that their liberation could come only through self-action, not by waiting for decrees from parliament. But when finally the SDP moved it was with the contradictory goal of organising a revolution but only to establish an idealised bourgeois democracy.

A small White army was formed under Mannerheim, the former tsarist general, comprised of the "Protection Guards," the 27th Jägers, and a brigade of 1,300 Swedish volunteers made up largely of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois youth. These "volunteers" included military officers that the Swedish government allowed to go on temporary "leave" to join the Finnish Whites.

The Whites attacked several poorly defended Russian garrisons in the North to acquire weapons, and it is likely that the commanders of those garrisons were complicit in letting the arms fall into the White Guards' hands. All told at that time, they had around 5,000 troops against the 1,500 poorly armed Red Guards. But the Red Guards were heroic, and with the help of some revolutionary

Russian commanders, including part of the Baltic Fleet, which was docked at Helsinki, they repelled Mannerheim's first attacks, and began arming and training more Finnish Red Guards.

On 3 March, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was forced on the Bolsheviks. One clause involved the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Finland. As the Russians left in the aftermath of Brest-Litovsk, the Germans entered. Svinhufvud opened the door to Wilhelm II's troops, and on 3 April, some 20,000 well-trained and equipped soldiers landed in Hangö, Helsinki, and Lovisa in Southern Finland, effectively attacking the Reds from the rear. After bitter street-by-street fighting, they captured Helsinki. One tactic used by the Kaiser's troops was to round up the workers' wives and children, and to march them in front of them through the streets. At least 100 women and children were killed during the fighting, and hundreds more women summarily shot without trial after Helsinki fell. They were marched out into the streets and onto the frozen ice and shot. The decisive battle came at Tavastehus. 20,000 to 25,000 Reds – who had been accompanied by their families – fought heroically before again being defeated. A few thousand escaped, but most did not. The reprisals were again brutal: the wounded were murdered in cold blood, thousands were massacred, and 10,000 taken prisoner.

“The struggle which is now in progress in Finland is not a class war... but is a collision between, on the one side a legal social order... and on the other side plain terrorist activity... the Finnish government cannot recognize for a moment these criminal gangs, which have initiated violence against all human and divine rights, are a belligerent party with who negotiations are possible.”

This was the announcement made by the Whites to justify murder of working-class activists with no trial, no legal process at all. From the foregoing, what we want to stress is, when the class struggle sharpens, whether because there is a revolutionary crisis or because of looming counter-revolution, the dominant class ignores liberal democracy, and the working class will find it inadequate.

Civil War, Terror and Crisis of Revolution in Russia

In Russia, too, the Civil War begun with white offensives. A line can be drawn, from the Kerensky-Kornilov conspiracy of August 1917, to the attempted counter-revolution. Along with this there was complete non-cooperation by the capitalists in the economic sphere. As a result, in both the political and economic spheres, there was a huge degree of centralisation without any prior plan on the part of the Bolsheviks. The decline of the Soviets did not occur, as Western myth has it, because Lenin had planned it from the start. Civil War made democratic functioning very difficult. In the economic sphere, the Bolsheviks had no plan for rapid nationalisation. On the contrary, the slogan of workers' Control actually meant continued ownership by the capitalists.

The overthrow of the Tsar inspired the workers, who returned to their factories determined to junk the old system in factories as well as at the top. Their earliest actions included the tearing up of old contracts of hire, the old rulebooks, and the blacklists. Just as they drove out the hated 'pharaohs' (mounted police) and the worst elements of the old bureaucracy from the government offices, so they set out to throw out the elements most identified with the repressive administration of the factories.

The other side of the democratisation process was the creation of the factory committees. Smith remarks that “The apparent spontaneity with which they appeared is something of an optical illusion, for there was a strong tradition within the Russian working class of electing stewards (starosty) to represent workers before management.”[\[xviii\]](#) This is not an adequate explanation. The rate-system in Germany, the shop stewards' movement in the United Kingdom, the factory councils in Italy, and so on show that it was not just a matter of the tradition of the Russian working class. In

any case, factory committees proliferated, and often clashed with the unions. In principle, the majority of the factory committees recognised the need for cooperation with the union. However, at the plant level they sought to guard their autonomy with tenacity, and this brought about clashes. The trade union structure was Menshevik dominated, for a variety of reasons. Even in June, when the All-Russian Central Council of Trade unions was formed, notwithstanding the rising tide in favour of Bolshevism, the Mensheviks won a majority. It was against their moderate politics that ordinary workers were fighting. Even before the soviets, the factory committees went over to the Bolsheviks on a mass scale. Among the political forces, the Mensheviks looked upon the factory committees as potential local cells of the unions, the only role that they considered legitimate. The Bolsheviks' relationship to the factory committee was more complex. Lenin in the April Theses called for the control of production and distribution by the soviets. But by control, he meant essentially accounting and checking. Lenin's assumption seems to have been that putting a majority of workers in the central control boards would counter bureaucratic control. Bolshevik policy was marked by contradictions throughout 1917. Smith's study suggests that the dominant Western interpretation of workers' control of production, which posits a dichotomy between the Bolshevik party and the factory committee movement, is not correct. This is certainly true of Avrich's claim that "From April to November, Lenin had aligned himself with the Anarcho-syndicalists But after the Bolshevik Revolution was secured, Lenin abandoned the forces of destruction for those of centralisation and order."[\[xix\]](#) Before the Soviet seizure of power there were five conferences of factory committees - four of the Petrograd Factory committees, and, from 17 to 22 October, the First All Russian Conference of Factory Committees. The debates there show a tripartite struggle between Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and Anarcho-Syndicalists. What is remarkable is that each time, workers control with some kind of centralisation was the line accepted. This suggests that factory committees recognised that grass roots activity was inadequate by itself.

The Bolshevik discourse on production was shaped in the Second International crucible, which often had deterministic philosophical premises latched on to a general technological optimism to produce an out and out productionist version of the historical dynamics of the forces and relations of production. The seizure of power was conceived as the last political (institutional) barrier to proletarian appropriation of neutral, and objectively emancipatory forces of production already formed within capitalism. Even Lenin, notwithstanding his return to Hegel and subsequent shifts in 1914-17, could not get rid of everything at one go. And we have to understand clearly that during the lifetime of Lenin, Bolshevism was not the mythic monolith that it would be portrayed as, later on. So Lenin's opinions did not equate Bolshevik line or even understanding. Lenin argued in 1917 that state monopoly capitalism represented the "complete material preparation for socialism".[\[xx\]](#) Central to his conception was the primacy attributed to the development of productive forces and labour productivity at any cost.[\[xxi\]](#)

Given these premises, Lenin's (and Trotsky's) enthusiasm for the principles of scientific management developed by Frederick Taylor is understandable. Lenin did make certain critical comments e.g. his warning on possible ill-effects on workers' health, etc.[\[xxii\]](#) But this was a minor aspect. Between this, and forced industrialization and Stakhanovism, there is no linear progress, but nor is it possible, in this sphere, to absolve Bolshevism of an ideological deficiency that subsequently was utilised by rising Stalinism. However, it is also necessary to stress that Lenin did not lose sight of the ultimate goal - a classless society. And the decline of workers' control was not simply the result of plotting by evil Bolsheviks like Lenin and Trotsky. The Soviet seizure of power made it possible to implement the slogan of workers' control. The All Russian Trade Union Council endorsed a narrow definition of workers' control, emphasizing only the creation of a central apparatus to regulate the economy. The leaders of the factory committee movement, by contrast, used the word 'Kontrol', to mean, more or less, management. On 14th November, the All Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) of the Soviets passed a decree on workers' control, legalising the de-facto system of control.

Lenin's draft, which served as the basis, gave considerable prominence to local level power.[\[xxiii\]](#)

What happened thereafter was a twofold shift. First, the refusal of any significant sector of Russian capitalism to cooperate led the factory committee movement to push for nationalisation. It has to be understood that in the early period the bulk of nationalisations came from below, not from the Council of Peoples' Commissars or the VTsIK. Thereupon, Lenin, and a number of leading Bolsheviks, went on to argue that the workers' state could have political democracy combined with individual management under state control.[\[xxiv\]](#) But they were opposed by a strong faction, the Left Communists, and more instinctively, by significant part of the workers. That explains why, in 1919, only 10.8% of Russian enterprises had come under one-man management. It was the civil war that, tearing apart the already crisis-ridden economy, destroyed workers' control. The main industrial regions of northern and central Russia remained under soviet rule throughout the civil war. But the industries often lacked coal (Donets), oil (Baku), iron (Urals, the Ukraine), cotton (Turkestan) etc. The export - import trade shrank dramatically. Taking the productivity per worker as 100 in 1913, in 1919, it was 22.[\[xxv\]](#) Terrible conditions, including lack of food, contributed to absenteeism. Large-scale industry in 1920 provided 18% of what it had produced in 1913.[\[xxvi\]](#) Even out of this meagre amount produced, the bulk was going to the army. With large parts of the peasantry turning hostile due to unequal town-country relations, food suppliers were uncertain, both the attempt to requisition grain, and the organisation of production, made a degree of excessive centralization easy to defend. In fact, though, this resulted in economic confusion. In this situation, centrifugal forces became acute. The journal of the Peoples' Commissariat for Labour described how factory committees fought only to keep their factory supplied with orders and funds, and even tried to use force.[\[xxvii\]](#) They behaved as though they were rival capitalist owners competing against each other. Shlyapnikov, the concerned Commissar, told the VTsIK on 20 March 1918, that there was a total chaos in the railways, and that committees were unable to make the system work. The curbs on workers' control began with those in the railways (20 March 1918), followed by industries important for the army, like machine and metalworking plants, leather and shoe factories, etc. It is worth noting that Shlyapnikov had been quite on the left in 1917 and would be one of the three principal leaders of the 1921 Workers' Opposition, so his criticism of the collegial system shows the situation was one where there were practical problems, rather than any dogmatic opposition to grass-roots democracy. Thus, "authority" that is, centralization at the cost of the factory committees, developed out of the failure of the committees to protect the industries at a period of acute crisis. Moreover, with nationalization accomplished, it was no longer possible to view the bourgeoisie as the main enemy.

As other parties, and factory committees, both collapsed, in one case because of the conflicts of the civil war, in the other case because of the economic problems noted, the call for one-man, management became stronger, and ceased to be justified as stop-gap measures, or special cases. As late as March, 1920, in Petrograd 69% of the factories employing over 200 workers were still run by collegial boards.[\[xxviii\]](#) The experience of the democratic factory was not simply given up, whether by the workers as a whole, or by most Bolsheviks. But as tens, and hundreds of thousands of most militant workers, mobilized by the unions, joined the army, the militants of 1917 - early 1918 were no longer in a position to assert their standpoint.

As yet, the party did not abandon the goal. The programme adopted in 1919 called for an intimate association between the Soviet power and the trade unions.[\[xxix\]](#) But an unending number of exceptions began to be made. The turning point came in 1920-21. And it came about without any understanding of the gravity of the situation. In February 1920, it became clear to Trotsky, that the policy of War Communism had arrived at a blind alley. But when he proposed a shift to a tax in kind. It was ruled out by the Central Committee.[\[xxx\]](#) Failing in this, Trotsky, however, did not carry out the struggle. On the contrary, at the Ninth Congress, Trotsky and Lenin developed a line advocating

a type of forced work. The 9th Congress fully approved Trotsky's report. A number of important party leaders, including Rykov, Lomov and Larin, all members of the Supreme Council of National Economy, and Tomsy, Nogin and other trade unionists opposed this policy. But it bears saying that this was a policy of the Central Committee, endorsed by the Party Congress. Trotsky was putting forward a theory of dictatorship of the proletariat which was at variance, not only with Marx's views but also with those of Lenin and himself expressed in earlier years. Here dictatorship was being opposed to democracy. Nor was Trotsky particularly unique in this. Irrespective of the exact words, Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, all the major party leaders in fact, adopted this kind of stand. What made Trotsky's case piquant was the fact that he had warned, 16 years earlier, about such substitutionism. Secondly, Trotsky was seeking to convince the party and the unions of the correctness of his line, by democratic means. In other words, Trotsky was using the institutions of workers' democracy to urge the working class, in the name of saving the workers' state, to give up workers' democracy. The very absurdity of the process enabled a massive opposition to be generated. It was as if workers' democracy, in the last era of its existence, was still compelling the Bolsheviks to acknowledge it. Thus a large scale opposition sprang up at all levels. At the Communist fraction of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, nearly 60-70 members opposed Lenin and Trotsky.[\[xxxix\]](#) At the party Congress, Osinskii said, "what you are doing is implanting bureaucracy under the flag of militarization."[\[xxxix\]](#)

Critics of Bolshevism, including 'left' critics, often disregard the circumstances of many of Lenin's and Trotsky's statements of this period. The Civil war had necessitated a tremendous centralization, so that the army could fight. As Carr has written, "as early as October 1918 the shortage of raw materials made it imperative to close the less efficient factories in many branches of industry and concentrate production, in the most efficient; such decisions could only be taken by a strong central authority."[\[xxxix\]](#)

In the beginning the Bolshevik regime had about 30,000 or so Red Guards in Petrograd and Moscow. Trotsky began to build up the Red Army in 1918. The initial volunteers were good enough against Russian opposition, as weak and as badly organised. But against Germans in the Ukraine or the Czechs in Siberia they were helpless. Moreover, a pure voluntary force was insufficient. By April, 1918 the Red Army had about 200,000 soldiers. On 22 April 1918, the VTsIK approved a Decree on Compulsory Military Training. On 29 May, it decreed the first step towards conscription. By July the Red Army had grown to 725, 383, and by end of 1919 it was 3 million strong.[\[xxxix\]](#)

However, while fighting the civil war was the fundamental cause of this centralisation, the growth of a military and a bureaucratic apparatus, many leading Bolsheviks too often made a virtue out of necessity. This has been discussed at length in Soma Marik's book.[\[xxxix\]](#) By 1921, this process culminated in actions that would damage the socialist orientation massively. As a result, when a year later Lenin, Trotsky, and others started becoming aware, they found the system already turning against them. In 1921, all opposition parties, including those which accepted Soviet legality, were banned. At the Tenth Party Congress, a ban on factions was adopted, which became permanent. Previously, various currents in the party had been represented in the Central Committee in close to their actual strength at the Congress. Now, Lenin and his supporters, who had a majority, swept the list. Struggles over the same Congress led to the removal of party leaders from trade union leadership if they did not support the position of the Central Committee. Thus, while seen as one more ad hoc step due to the civil war, the war with Poland, etc., in fact 1921 saw a terrible blow to workers' democracy.

However, what emerged therefore was not a simple restoration of capitalism. Rather, the section of the working class that had been pushed into administrative positions, including many sincere party activists, turned to bureaucratic practices which over time turned into a confirmed bureaucratic social layer. Christian Rakovsky, a Balkan Marxist who had joined the Bolsheviks, had been part of

the Bolshevik fightback in the Ukraine, would fight for the autonomy of Ukraine against the kind of centralisation Stalin was to demand with the formation of the USSR, and would be a leader of the Left Opposition, wrote a remarkable essay in 1928. In this, he pointed out :

When a class takes power, one of its parts becomes the agent of that power. Thus arises bureaucracy. In a socialist state, where capitalist accumulation is forbidden by members of the directing party, this differentiation begins as a functional one; it later becomes a social one. I am thinking here of the social position of a communist who has at his disposal a car, a nice apartment, regular holidays, and receiving the maximum salary authorized by the party; a position which differs from that of the communist working in the coal mines and receiving a salary of fifty or sixty Roubles per month. As regards workers and employees, you know that they are divided into eighteen different categories ...

Another consequence is that certain functions formerly satisfied by the party as a whole, by the whole class, have now become the attributes of power, that is, only of a certain number of persons in the party and in this class.

The unity and cohesion which formerly were the natural consequences of the struggle of the revolutionary class cannot now be maintained but by the application of the whole system of measures which have for their aim the preservation of the equilibrium between the different groups of this class and of this party, and to subordinate these groups to the fundamental goal.

But this constitutes a long and delicate process. It consists in educating politically the dominant class in such a way as to make it capable of holding the state apparatus, the party and the syndicates, of controlling and of directing these organisms. I repeat this: it is a question of education. No class has been born in possession of the art of government. This art can only be acquired by experience, thanks to the errors committed, that is by each learning from his errors. No Soviet constitution, be it ideal, can ensure to the working class an exercise without obstacle of its dictatorship and of its control over the government if the proletariat does not know how to utilise its rights under the constitution. The lack of harmony between the political capacities of any given class, its administrative ability and the judicial constitutional forms that it establishes for its own use after the taking of power, is a historical fact.[\[xxxvi\]](#)

It can be said that the revival of working-class democracy required two components—an actual growth and cohesion of the working class, which had been shattered due to war and civil war (the number of industrial workers fell by just under 58% between 1917 and 1921-22), and the stability of democratic institutions. As late as 1921, the existence of the institutions had enabled the Workers' Opposition to gain considerable hearing and support. In 1922, Lenin would find himself outmanœuvred by the General Secretary. In 1923-24, the Left Opposition would find itself defeated in heavily manipulated local voting. In 1927 the United Opposition would find the Central Committee even refusing to publish its platform for all party members to read.

From 1922, Lenin, Trotsky, Preobrazhenskii, Piatakov, and a number of others would make sharp criticisms of the bureaucracy. But the bureaucracy had already become powerful in the party too. At the 12th Party Congress, Stalin argued that after a correct line has been given it is necessary to choose staffs in such a way as to fill the various posts with people who are capable of carrying out the directives.[\[xxxvii\]](#) Thus, the party was being seen as a centralized machine rather than an independent minded vanguard. And responding to demands that the entire party be kept informed, he asserted that a party of 4,00,000 members, if it was fully informed, would mean the confidential information leaking out, which was not possible since Soviet Union was surrounded by world imperialism. Thus, the bogey of imperialism was raised for the first time to rule out internal democracy.

As a result, if we are to consider the rise of a dictatorship in the contemporary sense rather than in Marx's sense of the dictatorship of the proletariat, we need to look at the crucial period 1918-1928, when the soviet system broke down, when a working class bureaucracy emerged, and having emerged, separated itself from the class, and created its power structure. This is what Trotsky, Mandel and our current have called a bureaucratically degenerated workers' state—a state that originated as a workers' state, but underwent a bureaucratic degeneration and a partial counter-revolution.

We have laid out the possibility of a different analysis here. Kavita Krishnan has raised an important debate – rather late in the international context, but still important. Not just Krishnan, but even more, parties still seeing socialism in Stalinist or post-Stalinist USSR, etc, need to return to the lessons of classical Marxism, and carry out an analysis of the past, not for academic exercise, but because unless we learn from the past and rectify our errors we cannot move forward. And not only individual activists like Krishnan but organisations need to understand that the rejection of Stalinism open up two possibilities. Either an adherence to class analysis, or an acceptance of a binary between democracy versus authoritarianism. By calling the Soviet Union under Stalin 'socialist authoritarianism' Krishnan takes a step in the wrong direction, since the USSR was certainly not capitalist, but nor was it socialist if Marx and Engels are in any way guides to what socialism has to be. We hope she will retract. We hope that those criticising her will not retreat turtle like and pretend that Stalinism was virtually a flawless socialism, but engage in a fruitful dialogue that leads to a restatement of classical Marxism, enriched by the experience of the class struggle of a further century.

Kunal Chattopadhyay

Endnotes

I am grateful to Tithi Bhattacharya, Achin Vanaik and Peter Solenberger for reading and commenting on the first draft.

[i]Not given here. See her original Facebook post for any links she has given.

[ii]Putin's speech, the Russian strategy, and our perspectives are discussed in Kunal Chattopadhyay and Achin Vanaik, 'No to Russian Imperialist Aggression, No to US/NATO Interference', https://spectrejournal.com/no-to-russian-imperialist-aggression-no-to-us-nato-interference/?fbclid=IwAR3X6OtbJUeB3VMu9j9Ep9BrOQ4lt41bLP2IWOZuAjHMi9WqRs4DSY_zbHk

[iii]<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/ch09.htm>

[iv]See Kunal Chattopadhyay, *The Marxism of Leon Trotsky*, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2006, pp.52-60.

[v]'Capitalist Restoration in the Former Soviet Union', <http://www.radicalsociast.in/articles/marxist-theory/100-capitalist-restoration-in-the-former-soviet-union>

[vi]Perry Anderson, 'Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism', pp. 123-4, in Tariq Ali (Ed), *The Stalinist Legacy*, Haymarket, Chicago, 2013.

[vii]Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, *Athens On Trial*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

- [viii] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Moscow, [hereafter ME: CW], Vol. 22, p. 634.
- [ix] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm>
- [x] Ibid.
- [xi] Ibid.
- [xii] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/preface.htm>
- [xiii] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch04.htm>
- [xiv] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/postscript.htm>
- [xv] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1909/power/ch05.htm#f1>
- [xvi] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1918/dictprole/ch01.htm>
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- [xviii] S.A. Smith, *Red Petrograd*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 57.
- [xix] P. Avrich, 'The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control', *Slavic Review*, No. 1, 1963, p. 62.
- [xx] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Moscow 1965 on, [hereafter cited as LCW Vol. 25, p. 363]
- [xxi] Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 257; Vol. 29, p. 427; and Vol. 36, p. 549 for examples.
- [xxii] For the critical dimension of his appreciation of Taylorism, cf. *ibid.*, Vol. 33 pp. 245 - 6, 368 - 9
- [xxiii] See *Dekrety sovetsoi Vlasti*. Vol. 1, Moscow 1957, pp. 77 - 65, and *Obrazovaniye v razvitiye organov Sotsialisticheskogo Kontrol v SSSR (1917 - 1975)* Moscow, 1975, pp. 21. - 23, see also, I. A. Gladkov (ed.) *Natsionalizatsiya promyshlennosti v SSSR 1917 - 20gg*, Moscow, 1954, pp. 76 - 84, for a broad definition of workers' control used by factory committees.
- [xxiv] LCW : 29, p.70, *Ibid* : 27, p.268.
- [xxv] L. N. Kritzman, *Die heroische periode der grossen russischen Revolution*, Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Neue Kritik,, 1971, p. 293.
- [xxvi] J. Bunyan, *The Origin of Forced Labour in the Soviet State : 1917 - 1921*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins Press, 1967, pp. 173 - 4.
- [xxvii] T. Cliff, *Lenin*, Vol.3, Pluto Press, London, 1978, p.117, notes 19 and 20.
- [xxviii] S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd*, p. 242.
- [xxix] N. I. Bukharin and E.A. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, Harmondsworth 1989, p.448.
- [xxx] *Desiatii S"ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 451-2.

[xxxix] J. Bunyan, The Origins of Forced Labour p.92.

[xxxix] Ibid., p.123.

[xxxix] E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, vol. 2, p.183.

[xxxix] This account is based on Trotsky's How the Revolution Armed, 5 vols, London 1979-81 and My Life.

[xxxix] Soma Marik, Revolutionary Democracy: Emancipation in Classical Marxism, Haymarket, Chicago, 2018, pp. 367-494.

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P.S.

• Radical Socialist. Published on Tuesday, 01 November 2022 09:29:

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