

humanitarianism but as a response to the need for the development of the productive forces, which were constricted by outmoded social relations.

In a similar vein, the feudal system yielded to the capitalist mode of production, not because the bourgeoisie was less repressive, more humanitarian, or extracted less of the surplus product from the producers. On the contrary, under the system of capitalist exploitation the new master class extracted more of the surplus product in the form of surplus value from the backs of the producers than all other previous modes of production put together.

None of the basic classes in history which emerged as ruling classes did so without a previous life and death political struggle, without the use of conspiracy, without cunning manipulation, and without the use of fraud and deceit of the conquered classes. Certainly all this played a great part in the final outcome of the struggle and the final ascendancy and political supremacy of one class over another and over society in general. But in the long run, each of the historical classes that assumed control over society was able to do so because it had a historic mission to perform before it gave way to a more advanced class.

Each class advanced the productive forces to a higher level than was prevalent in the preceding mode of production. It changed the character of the relations of production precisely because the old relations of production had become incompatible with and hampered the growth of the productive forces.

Role of the proletariat today

In modern times, the proletariat is the only class which can succeed on a world scale and take the reins of society from the decadent bourgeoisie, which is hampering the harmonious development of the productive forces by maintaining the outmoded, antiquated, and severely oppressive social relations based on imperialist exploitation and oppression.

The proletariat is the only class that has a truly historic mission to carry out which no preceding class could accomplish and which the bourgeoisie is utterly incapable of executing. That is to organize, or rather reorganize, society on a rational basis, purge it of the incredibly destructive economic crises born out of the anarchy of capitalist production, and begin the reorganization of production for human needs and not for profit.

The proletariat is the only class capable of putting an end to catastrophic imperialist wars and destructive economic dislocation. It is the only class capable of satisfying all of humanity's needs and assuring its further existence and development. And it can do this precisely because it can free the productive forces of society from the encroachments and restrictions of capitalist private property and assure their limitless development for the good of humanity and not for narrow private interests and exploitation.

No other class is as consistent with the needs of the rest of humanity as is the proletariat. Other classes and social groupings can play a revolutionary role in society only by adopting the viewpoint of the proletariat and making their interests identical with the class interests of the proletariat.

Marxism challenged once again

All of the above, which are fundamental postulates of the Marxist theory of social development, are once again being called into question, just as has happened before during periods of social crisis and whenever there have been setbacks to the cause of the working class and the oppressed.

The widespread disenchantment and disillusionment of certain strata of the population, and in particular of the radical petty bourgeoisie, with extremely negative developments in the USSR, both internally as well as in foreign policy, have caused them to make a headlong retreat in the direction of bourgeois apologetics and a renunciation of basic Marxist doctrine. This is reflected in a "new" appreciation of the USSR as a state ruled either by a new exploiting class or by the old bourgeoisie restored in a new disguise. In either case, the analysis is based on a rupture with Marxism as the doctrine of social evolution and is in effect a retreat to the bourgeois theory that chance and not historic necessity governs social development.

Many of the theoreticians who hold the view that the USSR is a bourgeois state, albeit of a new type, have explained the development on the basis of conspiracy, fraud, deceit, Machiavellian tactics, and what-not. Others, who have based themselves on a somewhat less superficial theory, have sought to explain their theory of the transformation of the USSR into a capitalist state on the narrow data which became available as a