



Will it be possible for private property to be abolished at one stroke?

No, no more than existing forces of production can at one stroke be multiplied to the extent necessary for the creation of a communal society. In all probability, the proletarian revolution will transform existing society gradually and will be able to abolish private property only when the means of production are available in sufficient quantity.

Friedrich Engels, Principles of Communism, 1847

If private property, money, abstract value production, class society, and the state, are abolished prematurely, when the oppressive logic and power of capital still controls the entire world, the country might be torn apart once again by civil war, and once again subjected to imperialist domination. The Chinese revolution, what so many millions fought, worked tirelessly, and sacrificed their lives for, will have been for nothing.

Marxism is anything but rigid and dogmatic, and has always been about adapting to the ever changing objective conditions of each era, using what ever is available toward revolutionary goals. The opinion of those baizuo who think that China should have chosen the disastrous course of action described above, or at least remained under the yoke of harsh repressions, determined to build up China into a willars worthy of war: "China has billionsaires." "China still has inequality." "China still has wage labour."

"There's no free speech there." "Suicide nets." "Liberate Hong Kong." "Neither Washington Nor Beijing." Their indulgence in atrocity propaganda is unparalleled, and they'll often outdo original sources and even the most vicious reactionaries in their preening paraphrases of Chinese horror.

Roderic Day, China Has Billionaires, 5th of April, 2021

Taken together, these accounts tell a pretty compelling and straightforward story: a worker state led by a vanguard party has placed the proletariat in a position of relative weakness, and human control once again for the benefit of the many rather than the few, and so definitively begun the complex and difficult transition away from capitalism and into communism that we call socialism.

... And then the Western Left bursts onto the scene with a litany of harsh recriminations, determined to build up China into a willars worthy of war: "China has billionsaires." "China still has inequality." "China still has wage labour."

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The pure socialists' ideological anticipations remain unaltered by existing practice. They do not explain how the manifold functions of a revolutionary society would be organized, how external attack and internal sabotage would be thwarted, how bureaucracy would be avoided, scarce resources allocated, fences set, priorities set, and production and distribution conducted. Instead, they offer vague statements about how the workers themselves will directly own and control the means of production and will arrive at their own solutions through creative struggle.

Michael Parenti, Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism

Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it. Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, 1845

[...] it is only possible to achieve real liberation in the real world by employing real means, that slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and the mule and spinning-jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture, and that, in general, people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. "Liberation" is an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie, the conditions of intercourse.

Karl Marx, The German Ideology, 1845-1846

I have, which will be completely unrealistic, been speculating—partly in American funds, but more especially in English stocks, and here are springing up like mushrooms this year (in furtherance of every imaginable and unimaginable joint stock enterprise), have forced up to a quite unreasonable level, and now, for the most part, collapse. In this way, I am made over £400 and, now that the complexity of the political situation affords greater scope, I shall begin all over again. It's a type of operation that makes small demands on one's time and energy.

Karl Marx, Letter to Lion Philips, 25 June 1864, preserved in Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 41

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 cannot be anything but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, 1875

"We made the mistake of deciding to go over directly to communist production and distribution. We thought that under the surplus-food appropriation system the peasants would provide us with the required quantity of grain, and that we would be able to control the factories and thus achieve communist production and distribution [...]. Brief experience convinced us that that line was wrong; that it ran counter to what we had previously written about the transition from capitalism to socialism, namely, that it would be impossible to bypass the period of socialist accounting and control in approaching even the lower stage of communism [...]. Our theoretical literature has been definitely stressing the necessity for a prolonged, complex transition through socialist accounting and control from capitalist society (and the less developed it is the longer the transition will take) to even one of the approaches to communist society."

[...]

Get down to business, all of you! You will have capitalists beside you, including foreign capitalists, concessionaires and leaseholders. They will squeeze profits out of you amounting to what is called a Soviet tax. They will be operating alongside of you. Let them. Meanwhile you will learn from them the business of running the economy, and only when you do that will you be able to build up a communist republic. Since we must necessarily learn quickly, any slackness in their dealings with fellow human beings, and sometimes even cruel training, because we have no other way out.

Lenin, The New Economic Policy, 1921

To make things even clearer, let us first of all take the most concrete example of state capitalism. Everybody knows what this example is. It is Germany. Here we have "the last word" in modern large-scale capitalist engineering and planned organization, subject to Junker-bourgeois imperialism. Cross out the words in italics, and in place of the militarist, Junker, bourgeois, imperialist state put also a state, but of a different social type, of a different class content; a Soviet state, that is, a state, proletarian state, and you will have the sum total of the conditions necessary for socialism.

Socialism is inconceivable without large-scale capitalist engineering based on the latest discoveries of modern science. It is inconceivable without planned state organization, which keeps tens of millions of people to the strictest discipline in their work in the production and distribution. We Marxists have always spoken of this, and it is not worth while wasting two seconds talking to people who do not understand even this (anarchists and a good half of the left-socialist-revolutionaries).

At the same time socialism is inconceivable unless the proletariat is the ruler of the state. This also is ABC. And history knows nobody, except Menshevik blockheads of the first order, ever expected to bring about "complete" socialism smoothly, gently, easily and simply. It has taken such a peculiar course that it has given birth in 1918 to two unexpected and mutually exclusive existing side by side like two future chickens in the single shell of international imperialism.

Lenin, "Left-Wing" Childishness, 1918

For socialism is merely the next step forward from state-capitalist monopoly. Or, in other words, socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly.

Lenin, The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It, Section titled: Can We Go Forward If We Fear No Advance Towards Socialism?, 1917

The state capitalism, which is one of the principal aspects of the New Economic Policy, is, under Soviet power, a form of capitalism that is deliberately permitted and restricted by the working class. Our state capitalism differs essentially from the capitalism of the Western countries that has bourgeois governments in that the state with us is represented not by the bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat, who has succeeded in winning the full confidence of the peasantry.

Lenin, To the Russian Colony in North America, 14th November, 1922

We often say that our republic is a socialist one. Does this mean that we have achieved socialism, done away with classes and abolished the state (for the achievement of socialism implies the withering away of the state)? Or does it mean that classes, the state, and so on, will still exist unaltered and unabolished? Are we entitled in that case to call our republic a socialist one? Of course, we are. From what standpoint? From the standpoint of our determination and our readiness to achieve socialism, to do away with classes, etc.

Stalin, Reply to Kushytev, 1928

Once power has been conquered, the task of construction, above all in economy, becomes posed as the key and, at the same time, the most difficult task. The solution of this task depends upon factors of different orders and varying scope: First, the level of the productive forces have been developed and in particular the reciprocal relation between industry and agriculture. Second, the general cultural and organizational level of the working class which has conquered the power. Third, the political situation internationally and nationally, namely — whether the bourgeoisie has been defeated decisively or still continues to resist; whether foreign military interventions are underway; whether the technological intelligentsia engages in sabotage, and so forth.

The relative importance of these factors for socialist construction varies in order that I have enumerated. The most fundamental of these factors is the level of the productive forces; next comes the cultural level of the proletariat; and, finally, the political or military-political situation in which the proletariat finds itself consequent upon the conquest of power. But this is a rigidly logical order. In practice, the working class upon assuming power collides first of all against political difficulties. In our country these were the White Guard fronts, the interventions, and the foreign imperialists. The proletarian vanguard runs up against difficulties the broadest from the inadequate cultural level of the steepest working masses. And only then — and thirdly — does the economic construction collide with the limits set by the existing level of the productive forces.

Our party when in power had to carry on its work almost invariably under the most difficult conditions dictated by the civil war, and the history of economic construction during the five years of soviet Russia's existence cannot be understood if approached solely from the standpoint of economic expediency. It must be approached, first of all, with the gauge of military-political expediency, and, only in the second place with the gauge of economic expediency.

What is rational in economic life does not always coincide with what is necessary in politics. If in the course of war I am menaced by a White Guard invasion, I blow up a bridge. From the abstract standpoint of economic expediency it is barbarism, but from a political standpoint it is a necessity. I would be a fool and a criminal not to blow up a bridge in time. We are reconstructing our economy as a whole primarily under the pressure of the need to secure militarily the power of the working class. We have learned in the elementary school of Marxism that it is impossible to jump from capitalism into the socialist society at one leap.

Trotsky, The New Economic Policy of Soviet Russia and the Perspectives of the World Revolution, 1922

"The modern factories that originated in Germany in World War II had their origin in the German industrial and foreign investment agreements signed with foreign firms [...] By March 1930 the (USSR) had signed 104 contracts. Of the 104, 81 were with American or German companies [...] Over 400 American engineers made the architectural drawings for the Magnitogorsk plant, the largest project in the First Five-Year Plan. [...] In May 1930, McKee was hired to supervise the construction of power electrical on the project [...] McKee brought in engineers from General Electric to work on the huge electric installation. New open-hearth furnaces were designed by the Freyn Company [...] and the German Morgan Engineering Company [...] and the German Demag A-G."

Walter Dunn Jr., The Soviet Economy and the Red Army 1930-1945, 1995

The upper petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie, oppressed and injured by the state power, may take part in the new-democratic revolution or stay neutral, though they are themselves bourgeois. They have no ties, or comparatively few, with imperialism and are the genuine national bourgeoisie, wherever the state power of New Democracy extends. It must firmly and unhesitatingly protect them.

[...]

It is absolutely impermissible to repeat such wrong ultra-left policies towards the upper petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie sectors in the economy as our Party adopted during 1931-34 (unduly advanced labour conditions, excessive income tax rates, encroachments on the interests of industrialists and merchants during the land reform, and the adoption as a goal of the so-called "workers' welfare", which was a short-sighted and one-sided concept, instead of the goal of developing production, promoting economic prosperity, giving consideration to both public and private interests, and to both labour and capital). To repeat such mistakes would certainly damage the interests both of the working masses and of the new-democratic state.

[...]

To sum up, the economic structure of new China will consist of: (1) the state-owned economy, which is the leading sector; (2) the agricultural economy, developing step by step from individual to collective; and (3) the economy of small independent craftsmen and traders and the economy of small and middle private capitalist enterprises constitute the whole of the new-democratic national economy. The principles guiding the new-democratic national economy must closely conform to the general objective of developing productive forces and promoting prosperity, giving consideration to both public and private interests and benefiting both labor and capital. Any principle, policy or measure that deviates from this general objective is wrong.

Mao Zedong, The Present Situation and Our Tasks, 25th December, 1947.

preserved in The Selected Works of Mao Zedong

"We want to do business." Quite right, business will be done. We are against no one except the domestic and foreign reactionaries who hinder us from doing business. [...] We have beaten the internal and external reactionaries by uniting all domestic and international forces, we shall be able to do business with all foreign countries on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for sovereign integrity and sovereignty.

Mao Zedong, On The People's Democratic Dictatorship, 30th June, 1949

"I am convinced that more and more people will come to believe in Marxism, because it is a science. Using historical materialism, it has uncovered the laws governing the development of human society. Feudal society, imperialist society, capitalist society supplanted feudalism, and, after a long time, socialism will necessarily supersede capitalism. This is an irreversible general trend of historical development, but the road has two twists and turns. Over the several centuries that it took for capitalism to replace feudalism, how many times were monarchies restored! So, in a sense, these monarchies are usual and can hardly be avoided. Some countries have suffered major setbacks, and socialism appears to have been weakened. The people have been tempered by the setbacks and have drawn lessons from them, and that will make socialism develop in a healthier direction. So don't panic, don't think that Marxism has disappeared, that it's not useful any more and that it has been defeated. Nothing of the sort!"

Deng Xiaoping, Excerpts From Talks Given In Kunming, Shenzhen, Zhuhai And Shanghai, 1992

Recently the college and university students created some disturbances. It is not the students themselves who are to blame for it but a small number of persons with ulterior motives, mainly higher intellectuals inside the Party who incited them to action. We are not to be misled by them sternly. But the struggle against bourgeois liberalization has not ended. Some people are still not clear what we are doing now in China. Everyone says that the modernization programme is a good thing, but some people have an understanding of it that is different from ours. By modernization we mean socialist modernization, but what those people advocate is modernization without socialism. This shows that they have forgotten the essence of the matter and that they have departed from the road China must take in its development.

Deng Xiaoping, We Must Tell Our Young People About China's History, 1987

This question is vital: here we can make no concessions. We shall continue to struggle against bourgeois liberalization throughout the process of modernization, not only in this century but in the next. However, precisely because this will be a long-term struggle, instead of launching a political movement we shall use mainly the method of education. Education and persuasion are also a form of struggle. But only our achievements in economic development can eventually convince those who do not believe in socialism. If we can become comparatively prosperous by the end of this century, they will be partly convinced, and when we have turned China into a moderately developed socialist country by the middle of the next century, they will be completely convinced. By that time most of them will have recognized their mistake. I think it will be possible for us to reach that magnificent goal.

Deng Xiaoping, We Must Tell Our Young People About Chinese History, 1987

Why do some people always insist that the market is capitalist and only planning is socialist? Actually they are both means of developing the productive forces. So long as they serve that purpose, we should make use of them. If they serve socialism they are socialist; if they serve capitalism they are capitalist. It is not correct to say that planning is only socialist, because there is a planning department in Japan and there is also planning in the United States.

Deng Xiaoping, Planning and the Market Are Both Means of Developing the Productive Forces, 1987

The United States and the Soviet Union have held talks that showed an encouraging tendency towards disarmament. We are happy to see this. I looked forward to the end of the Cold War, but now I feel disappointed. It seems that one Cold War has come to an end but that two others have already begun: one is being waged against all the third countries of the South and the Third World; and the other is being waged against those who do not believe in socialism. The Western countries are staging a third world war without gunsmoke. By that I mean they want to bring about the peaceful evolution of socialist countries towards capitalism.

We are not surprised at the developments in Eastern Europe. These changes were bound to take place sooner or later. The troubles there started from inside. The Western countries have the same attitude towards China as towards the East European countries. They are unhappy that China adheres to socialism. The turmoil that arose in China this year also had to come about sooner or later. We ourselves and "friends" of the West know, two of our General Secretaries fell because of their failure to deal with the problem of bourgeois liberalization. If China allowed bourgeois liberalization, there would inevitably be turmoil. [...]

The Group of Seven summit meeting issued a declaration imposing sanctions on China. What qualifies them to do that? Who or what is the authority? Actually, national sovereignty is far more important than human rights, but they often infringe upon the sovereignty of poor, weak countries of the Third World. Their talk about human rights, freedom and democracy is only designed to safeguard the interests of the strong, rich countries, which take advantage of their strength to bully weak countries, and which pursue hegemony and practise power politics. We never listen to such stuff. No, no, no.

Deng Xiaoping, Speaking to Julius Nyerere, We Must Adhere To Socialism and Prevent Peaceful Evolution Towards Capitalism, 1989

So, to build socialism it is necessary to develop the productive forces. Poverty is not socialism. To uphold socialism, a socialism that is to be superior to capitalism, it is imperative first and foremost to eliminate poverty. True, we are building socialism, but that doesn't mean that what we are doing is not socialist. The socialist standard. Not until the middle of the next century, when we have reached the level of the moderately developed countries, shall we be able to say that we have really built socialism and to declare that it is completely superior to capitalism. We are advancing towards that goal.

Deng Xiaoping, To Uphold Socialism We Must Eliminate Poverty, 26th April, 1987

The mainland will maintain the socialist system and not turn off onto the wrong road, the road to capitalism. One of the features distinguishing socialism from capitalism is that socialism means that the wealth created belongs first to the state and second to the people; it is therefore impossible for a new bourgeoisie to emerge. The amount that goes to the state will be spent for the benefit of the people, a lot of it will be used to strengthen national defence and the rest to develop the economy, education and science and to raise the people's living standards and cultural level.

Since the downfall of the Gang of Four an ideological trend has appeared that we call bourgeois liberalization. Its proponents worship the "democracy" and "freedom" of the Western capitalist countries and reject socialism. This cannot be allowed. China must modernize; it must absolutely not liberalize or take the capitalist road, as countries of the West have done. Those proponents of bourgeois liberalization who have violated the line must be dealt with severely.

Deng Xiaoping, Bourgeois Liberalization Means Taking The Capitalist Road, 1985

