

Article

On the State and Democracy

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In these days, a process of study and debate is taking place in Party, on the question of democracy in the twenty-first century. The recently held Central Committee Meeting by emphasising the new exigency of synthesising experiences of the great revolutions and awful counterrevolutions, particularities of the present world situation and own experiences of the Nepalese People's War has adopted a draft resolution for debate. With an aim to helping this process of study and debate, some theoretical discussion on the state and democracy has been carried out here.

Sequence of development of the state and democracy: a theoretical concept

The question of democracy is inseparably intertwined with the question of state power. Therefore, while talking about the question of democracy, it is essential to understand correctly about the development of the state power. Everyone, who has preliminary knowledge of historical materialism on the development of human society, knows that the state power has emerged from a certain state and contradiction of development of production and the productive forces. There was neither any state nor democracy till a long historical period followed by the development of mankind from ape with a determining role of labour. According to scientific exploration, people, till a long period of about a million years, used to maintain their livelihood through collective efforts without any state and democracy. The process of labour, division of labour, production and the productive forces that developed in the course of that long historical period, also known as primitive communism, led to creating such an objective situation and contradiction because of which a necessity and development of the state gradually took place. On the basis of historical materialism, Marxism invented first time in the history a scientific concept in place of the entire conservative and idealist illusion about the prevalent human society and the process of its development. In his famous book "The origin of the family, private property and the state", Frederic Engels, the co-pioneer of Marxism, has, with a deep discussion on it, presented a scientific conclusion. It has been said there, "... The State, therefore, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies, which have managed without it, which had no notion of the state or state power. At a definite stage of economic development, which necessarily involved the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity because of this cleavage."

In this way, it is clear that 'a certain stage of economic development' because of which the erstwhile society got entrapped in an insoluble cleavage has been a responsible reason behind the origin of the state. Marxism has, on the basis of historical materialism, also explained the objective ground behind the origin of the state. On the basis of scientific invention of the general laws of social development and investigation of prevalent contradictions in the capitalist society, Marxism has deduced an undeniable conclusion about withering away of the state. Marxism clarified the scientific fact that the class-division and the state standing over its foundation was inevitable in a certain state of development of production and, this cleavage in another definite

state of development of the same becomes a hindrance for the society and the state too becomes unnecessary. Frederick Engels, in the same work has further said, "We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes has not only ceased to be a necessity, but becomes a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they once arose. The state inevitably falls with them. The society, which organizes production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong -- into the museum of antiquities, next to the spinning wheel and the bronze axe."

Attacking upon all kinds of concurrent idealist illusions, the same work says, "The state is therefore by no means a power imposed on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the moral idea,' 'the image and the reality of reason,' as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a particular stage of development; it is the admission that this society has involved itself in insoluble self-contradiction and is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms, which it is powerless to exorcise. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, shall not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, a power, apparently standing above society, has become necessary to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arisen out of society, but placing itself above it and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the state." In this way, Engels has, in relation to the origin of the State and its definition, presented a very correct and scientific materialist explanation. The state that has emerged as a result of class-contradiction went on being consolidated obviously as a tool of exploitation and repression upon the oppressed classes. The task and role of the state has been, in accordance with the state of economic development, to defend the interest of slave-owners in the slave era, of landlords in the feudal era and of bourgeoisie in the capitalist era, and to repress the masses opposed to it. Despite the form of the state has been changing in different epochs of economic development, no change has taken place in its essence as a tool of repression and cannot happen too.

In the history, because of the contradiction between productive forces and the production relation, whatsoever revolutions have taken place from the slave era to the capitalist one have all of them finally reinforced the state. Marxism, following a deep investigation of contradictions in the capitalist era, presented a very new and a historic task of shattering the state power forcefully, not of seizing the old one and consolidating it, and establishing a transitional one (which will gradually advance ahead in the direction of withering away) to smash the resistance of bourgeoisie. Lenin has mentioned the conclusion -- "All previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed" - as the main and basic factor of Marxist theory on the state. Karl Marx, mentioning the work named 'Eighteenth Brumaire' and clarifying this fact in a letter to Kugelmann, has said, "I say that the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it, and this is essential for every real people's revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting."

The aforesaid conclusion has, on the one hand, drawn up a clear demarcating line between the anarchism that opposes all kinds of powers including the state and, on the other, the right opportunism that by looking through bourgeois eyes conceives of the state as an eternal and universal. From the time of Marx and Engels to today, a clear ideological struggle has been

going on against anarchism and bourgeois reformism on the question of state power. What is required to be clear here is that without forcefully destroying the bourgeois state power it is impossible to open up the way to withering away of the state.

Asserting the 'centralized state power' as the 'specificity of bourgeois society' Lenin has said, "Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are connected with these institutions by thousands of threads." He further says, "The development, perfection, and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus proceeded during all the numerous bourgeois revolutions which Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism." It is clear that this 'development, perfection and strengthening' of the bureaucracy and the military mechanism is guided by the necessity of bourgeois class to repress upon the entire workers and labouring masses.

As a brilliant and authentic explanation of Marxism on the state, the following quotation from "Anti-Duhring" by Frederick Engels can be taken up:

"The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production in the first instance into state property. But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, based upon class antagonisms, had need of the state, that is, of an organisation of the particular class, which was pro tempore the exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage-labour). The state was the official representative of society as a whole; the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a state, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society -- this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not "abolished". It dies out. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase "a free people's state", both as to its justifiable use at times by agitators, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the demands of the so-called anarchists for the abolition of the state out of hand."

This lengthy quotation has clarified so many facts on the state. The state continues to exist as a state up to which it suppresses a certain class of the society. Its role as a state also vanishes when a situation in which it represents the whole of the society develops.

This fact applies on the question of democracy also. Whenever the state exists there cannot be anything like 'a democracy for all', 'the full democracy' or 'a free people's state'. When a situation in which the entire society acquires democracy develops, then the need of the democracy itself vanishes. Along with withering away of the state, the democracy, which is inseparably linked with the emergence of the state, is obvious to vanish. It is clear that the state exists till the classes exist in the society and the character of democracy also is class-based till the former exists. In fact, the state is democracy and the democracy is state. It can also be understood in other words - the state is dictatorship and the democracy is dictatorship. It is because the democracy of the exploiting class under their state becomes a dictatorship for the exploited class, whereas, the democracy of the proletarian class under their state becomes a dictatorship for the bourgeois class. There cannot be anything like a state for both, a democracy for both and a dictatorship for both. Democracy for the entire people is nothing other than the hypocrisy of the bourgeois class to confuse the working masses.

In today's capitalist imperialist era, there cannot be any bigger dishonesty and hypocrisy than to speak of 'adult franchise', 'independent and impartial election' and 'democracy for all', on the part of bourgeois class, before the standing army and bureaucracy, the main organ of the state power, which is the most centralized, consolidated, gigantic and merciless and destructive as well. The bourgeois exercise of rendering "divinity" to the so-called parliamentary system as an 'eternal' and 'universal' expression of democracy is not at all a thing that can conceal their militarisation, military insolence and plunderer and genocidal character. Lenin, in his work '**The state and revolution**' has clarified by saying that it is "To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament -- this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary- constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics". He has further clarified in it, "from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth -- in these countries the real business of "state" is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries, and General Staffs. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the "common people".

On the proletarian and bourgeois parliamentary democracy

We talked in short about the basic Marxist theory on the state and democracy. Here we will discuss more about the relation between the democracy of the proletariat and that of bourgeois class.

It is well known to everybody that the first historic experience of the proletarian democracy is the one of Paris Commune in France, in 1871. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels themselves worked out the theoretical synthesis of the Paris Commune experiences. As the first historical experience of proletarian democracy opposed to bourgeois parliamentarism, Marx, from his status of the great proletarian thinker, sharpened his ideas further by taking up lessons from it. During the period of transition from capitalism to communism, Marx put forward sharply the conclusion that the form of transitional state of the 'proletarian class organized as a ruling class' cannot be anything other than the dictatorship of the proletariat. As an important reason behind the failure of Paris Commune, he criticized in clear words the liberalism that it had shown while suppressing the bourgeois class. On the basis of the experience of Commune, Marx drew up in

both the theoretical and practical sense a line between the proletarian and bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

Marx said, "The Commune, was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time...."

"... Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress 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 workers, foremen and accountants for his business." (Lenin - **The State and Revolution**)

Karl Marx has elucidated the difference between two democracies of two classes through the aforesaid expression. Marxism does not oppose adult suffrage and the representative institution elected thereof, moreover, wants to transform it from a gossiping centre of the bourgeois class into a working institution of people's servants. How can it take place? Marx was not any hypothesisist. Citing a very simple and practical example, he said that the role of the masses in the proletarian democracy would definitely be like that of a master and, all the officials of the state will act as a servant of them. Marxism has lucidly synthesized that when the task of elected representatives becomes not only that of legislative but also becomes to implement the laws they have enacted, and, when the masses have right to revoke the representatives who go against people's interest, then the representative institution becomes a working centre of the masses and not a gossiping one. Drawing up the essence of Paris Commune experiences, Karl Marx has discussed on the specificity of the proletarian democracy in his work "Class struggle in France". There it is said, "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 councilors, 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"; "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 ... Having once got rid of the standing army and the police -- the physical force elements of the old government -- the Commune was anxious to break the spiritual force of repression, the "parson-power" ...The judicial functionaries were to be divested of that sham independence ...Magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable."

The aforesaid explanation of the Paris Commune experiences put forward by Karl Marx helps considerably to understand the basic specificity of proletarian democracy. 'The end of standing army', the election of entire functionaries of the state by the masses and provision of revoking them when the people feel necessary, equal salary for all the functionaries of the state, what can there be an ample democracy for the people other than this? •