

MARXIST THEORIES OF CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE.

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The Marxist theory of classes and class struggle belong to the key problems both of theory and political practice, strategy and tactics of the working class. It makes possible a scientific analysis of each historical stage of social development, a preliminary condition if the political struggle for the victory of socialism is to have effective leadership. It is, therefore, necessary not only to master the basic principles of this theory, but also to be able to use it as a method of social analysis under new historical conditions. Only thus will it be possible not only to withstand new bourgeois theories which devote themselves extensively to these questions, but also to understand the changes which are taking place in the class and social differentiation in contemporary capitalism and to draw the appropriate conclusions for the working-class movement.

THE ESSENCE OF MARXIST THEORY AND CLASS STRUGGLE

In the well-known letter to J. Weydemeyer, Karl Marx writes:

"As far as I am concerned, to me belong neither the merit of discovering the existence of classes in modern society, not the merit of the discovery of their mutual struggle..."

My contribution consists merely in proving that -

1. The existence of classes is connected only with a certain historical phases of development of production,
2. That Class Struggle leads necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship itself is only a transitional stage leading to the abolition of classes and to classless society...." 1

In what should, therefore, the essence and the new aspects of the Marxian theory of classes be sought? Marx regards classes and class struggle as a historical phenomenon which took place at a given stage of historical development. By carrying the fight on until it results in a socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, conditions for the extinction of classes and the creation of classless society are being prepared.

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Classes and Class Struggle are, above all, the product of economic development. Karl Marx proved that the apportioning of wealth in the sphere of distribution is the product of the distribution of ownership in production. If the slave-owning and, in the feudal order, the economic foundation of Class distribution was obscured by non-economic factors (the division into estates etc), then capitalism exposes fully the economic character of classes.

Even though the economic differences (based on the fact that a certain part of society owns the production means and other part, the out of all proportions larger part - does not own them and is therefore forced to work for the owners of the means of production - are decisive for class stratification, but in themselves are not sufficient for the real constitution of classes.

The consequence of the distribution of ownership is the power distribution in society. The economic superiority of the owners conditions their political superiority. The class which owns the means of production and which has economic power, usurps political power as well. They hold, in the first place, state power and all the means of political power which go with it (police, prisons, army, courts, etc.). Thus it can be said that the domination of production produces also all other types of domination of society.

Another consequence of the economic division of society and the supremacy of owners is the fact that the ideas prevailing in a given period are the ideas of the class holding economic power.

Classes and Class Interests: Classes, it is true, do not exist in isolation from one another. Individual men and women form a class only as long as they wage a real struggle against another class. The force which determines this creation of classes is the class interest which exists prior to the political constitution of the class. The proletariat has common interests from the beginning but to begin with it is an unorganized mass. It is thus a class set in opposition to capital but not as yet a class in itself. Class interest is not identical with the personal interest of the individual or of many individuals. Decisive is not what this or that proletarian or even all the members of the proletariat as a whole regard as their objective. Their goal and their historic task is the result of the situation they find them-

selves in. The common interest of the class therefore does not exist only in the mind of the proletariat, as something "general" but is the result of the mutual dependence of people, determined by the division of labour.

The class interest is therefore determined by objective interests which subsume each individual to the general interests of the class. That, however, does not exclude the contradiction between the personal interests of an individual and class interests. The bourgeoisie represents a typical example of this. Even though the capitalists have basically the same interests - as long as they stand as one class against the other - their interests as individuals and as groups are contradictory as long as they stand against each other as individuals and groups. This is again the result of the objective character of the capitalist production relations based on competition.

In capitalist society, based on contradictory interests, the result of economic conditions, two basic classes emerge: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The contradiction between the various workers and the capitalists assume increasingly the character of the contradiction of two classes. To begin with, the workers unite against capitalists in economic matters, predominantly those which concern wages.

With that is connected also the growth of theoretical awareness. As long as the proletariat is not sufficiently developed and its struggle does not bear a political character, its theoreticians are mere utopians, who in the effort to help the subjugated class think up ideal social systems. With the growth of the working class, when its historical role is manifested in actual battle - scientific theory - Marxism, emerges as the conscious foundation of its political struggle. On this foundation emerges the Marxist party as a unity of theory and practical political movement.

Lenin's Definition of Class. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels elaborated the theory of classes and of class struggle using historical and economic material. Karl Marx was preparing for a long time to work out systematically his theory of classes but the last chapter (52) of the Third Volume of Capital, entitled "Classes" remained unfinished. His "editor", Friedrich Engels, could but remark "here ends the manu-

script". That, however, does not mean that it is not possible to reconstruct the Marxist theory of classes and class struggle, and above all use the factual class analysis of the capitalist society of the time found in the various writings by Marx and Engels as a method for the investigation of the structure of contemporary society.

A comprehensive definition of class, in the spirit of Marx was given by V.I. Lenin:

"Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the position they hold in a given historical system of social production, by their relation to means of production (for the greater part safeguarded and laid down by law), their role in the social organization of labour and thus by their methods of acquiring and the size of their share of social wealth at their disposal. Classes are such groups of people of which one can appropriate the work of the other, because it holds a different place in a given system of social economy".²

This definition describes not only the essential feature of Marxist teaching concerning class membership (relation to means of production), but it takes into account also a number of further economic factors which make possible a more detailed analysis of classes. But in its analysis of the class structure, Marxism does not limit itself to economic factors alone. It investigates also the subjective and ideological aspects which play a part in the formation of social consciousness. The scientific character of the Marxist theory of classes is the result of the fact that it is capable of discovering the most significant characteristic which underlies the most complex variety of social relations, all the objective and subjective factors which cause the division of society into classes, strata and groups. It differs from the subjectivists sociological expositions of the character of classes by not regarding it as something given by their psychical nature or other subjective aspect, but tries to explain why for some classes these characteristics and for other classes other characteristics of their objective situation are typical particularly their socio economic situation, which is the most important aspect with regard to the social structure.

At the same time there can be no doubt that the reduction of society to classes cannot cover the whole complex range of characteristics, interests and opinions of all the members of the various classes of society nor of a given class. Within the working class, the same as within the bourgeoisie, there are groups which

differ from each other as regards their income, interests, opinions, political and moral ideas, education, etc. These factors also result in a certain amount of differentiation within the classes. From this point of view the Marxist class classification offers an ideal pattern. But even if we did dissect society into a mass of various groups, using a variety of criterions, we would find among its members many differences, for people are never absolutely the same.

The Methodological Importance of Marxist Theory of Classes For The Analysis of Social Structure:

In contrast to the majority of the bourgeois theories, Marxism systematically differentiates between groups and classes. Particularly in the analysis of contemporary capitalist society which is rather complicated as far as the social structure is concerned, the scientific Marxist approach is necessary for an accurate differentiation.

What are the general methodological principles of the Marxist model of the social and the class structure?

The historical approach demands that the social or class structure should not be investigated as "a given fact", but as the result of historical development. That means that it must investigate the forms out of which it originated, the conditions which moulded it, understand that it is not unchangeable and ask under what conditions a change will occur. Specifically in the application on the problem of class structure this means to start out of that what Marx regarded as the essence of his teaching concerning classes. Generally speaking, two main aspects must be taken into consideration:

1. The class structure emerged in certain historical conditions and it is bound to become defunct in changed conditions.
2. The classless society is bound to emerge.

Against this concept the bourgeois sociology presents two extreme theories:

- a) Classes do not exist (they are identical with groups),
- b) classes are eternal (the same as groups); a) classless society (capitalist) exists already - b) classless society is a utopia, a myth.

The long-term decisive factor of historical development of social and class structure is technical progress, the development of technology, organization of production, productivity and effectiveness of production. Together with it some other factors operate, the significance of which changes with time and place. Among these factors the most important are power and political and ideological factors which for a time are capable not only of moulding, but also of assuming a greater importance than the factor decisive in the long-term context.

The general model must show the many dimensions of the stratification and the untenability of a single "simple" model or a model valid for "modern" society as the sole social system.

The laws of development must be understood from the point of view of the theory of dialectical contradictions, as the emergence, development and extinction of contradictions between social groups and classes. Various types of conflicts and struggles (including those which characterize the class contradictions and antagonism) provide the impulse for the movement of contradictions.

The social strata are constituted according to the typical actions of the members of the collective, the group, determined by their position and interests. We can conceive them as large groups of people, the social behaviour of which differs with respect to each other in a typical manner, while the main dimensions determining membership in the group is the position held in the division of labour, the income, the share in power, prestige and social culture (values, ideology). These characteristics determine (and are determined) by the standing of the members in the given group, roughly their place in the organization of work, their standard of life, their social objectives, values and norms of behaviour.

The action of people as members of social groups in the long run is determined by their objective situation, origin and education. But the concrete action of the individual is frequently determined by "subjective" factor, by what he thinks of himself and his social status, what aims he pursues and what values he accepts and observes. The awareness of the links with a certain group is therefore an important aspect of the social structure. There may exist a difference between

the objective status of an individual and his opinion of his own situation.

The number of strata is relative, but always limited. Even though at the transitional points they almost merge, they must nevertheless be well definable. Many aspects can be used for the classification of social groups and strata in accordance with the differences and conflicts which interest us and their importance for the historical social movement. Thus we can work out the hierarchy of strata according to incomes, prestige, political power etc. The determination of the basic factor is essential for the construction of a general comprehensive structure. The economic factor can be regarded as basic for it determines the foundations of the standard of life, of the style of living, the mutual relations between social groups and, after all, it also influences all the other factors.

We can suppose that at a certain stage of technical and social development the economic factors and the size of income shall cease to play the most important role and other aspects will come to the fore as, for example, prestige, quality of personality, character etc.

Social structure and Class structure must be differentiated. Class structure is one of the specific aspects of social structure. They cannot be identified (as is often done by various sociologists) because in that case we would have to regard classes as the necessary concomitant of every social system. But neither can we separate them and regard them as something completely different.

Classes differ from social strata by always forming two extreme poles of the given social structure of contradictory interests and the transition from one class to the other is, in contrast from the strata, considerably limited. The characteristics which define a class have already been mentioned. The contradiction of classes and the struggle between them is therefore decisive for the mobility of the given social structure. Each of the two classes consists of further strata and groups, the result of economic and other factors.

The strata and groups which exist within the basic classes are included in them because in the given conditions their social action "inclines" towards the particular class (in addition, there may be individuals belonging to the group who maintain a "neutral

position", which need not to be taken into consideration in the class conflict). For this reason "main", "basic" or "auxilliary" classes are spoken about.

The above stated methodological principles of the Marxist theory of classes make possible an analysis of the class and social structure of contemporary capitalist society. We shall concentrate here on the technically most advanced capitalist countries. Before embarking upon this analysis we shall first analyze briefly the class structure of that period of capitalism which provided concrete examples used by the classics when working out their model of the capitalist society.

BASIC CLASSES AND STRATA OF CAPITALISTIC SOCIETY AND THE FORMS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

In capitalism two basic classes confront each other: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The contradiction between these classes is the immediate reflection of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, the contradiction between capital and labour.

Bourgeoisie:

One of the basic classes of the capitalist society is the bourgeoisie. In the note to the English edition of the Communist Manifesto, Friedrich Engels describes the bourgeoisie as follows:

"By bourgeoisie is to be understood the class of modern capitalists who own the means of social production and exploit wage-labour".³

The basic economic trait of the bourgeoisie is then the ownership of means of production and the exploitation of wage-labour. Economic supremacy leads to political supremacy and at the same time enables the bourgeoisie as the governing class to force society to accept its own ideology as the dominant one.

The economic position of the bourgeoisie and the resultant economic and political consequences lead to a number of contradictions, which then affect both the whole system of capitalist production relations and the relations within the bourgeoisie as a class. In contrast to all the preceding exploiting classes, the bourgeoisie is forced to revolutionarize constantly its production forces, to develop production and technology and step up exploitation. This continues to increase the

economic contradiction between the capitalists and the mass of the exploited and at the same time creates the conditions for the organization of the exploited masses, leading them to become aware of their common interests and of the need for revolutionary action. The competition and struggle leading to a concentration of production and capital is then reflected also in the deepening contradictions within the bourgeoisie itself, and manifests itself, above all, in the permanent tendency of the large bourgeoisie and the monopolies to swallow up the small capitalists.

The process of constant socialization of production increasingly clashes with the contradictory process, the concentration of decisive wealth in the hands of ever smaller number of monopolies and the private appropriation of the products of social work. This deepening contradiction becomes one of the objective reasons for the overthrow of the capitalist production relations and the victory of socialist revolution, in which the working class plays the decisive role.

Working Class: In a note on the Communist Manifesto, which we have already quoted, Friedrich Engels describes the working class as follows:

"By the proletariat is understood the class of modern wage-earning workers, who, not having their own means of production are forced, to be able to live, to sell their labour force".⁴

This characteristic is not an exhaustive definition. L.A. Leontiev in a discussion of the position of the working class in contemporary capitalism gave a somewhat more extensive definition which, however, also deals only with the economic aspects (though no doubt, these are decisive) of the working class:

"The proletariat in the Marxist-Leninist sense includes all categories of wage-earners who are deprived of production means and thus are forced to sell their labour, are exploited by capitalist entrepreneurs (including the bourgeois state as the collective capitalists), and who creating surplus value increase the value of capital".⁵

What are then the basic features of the working class in capitalism, why is it the most progressive and the most revolutionary force, and out of what conditions did its historic mission develop (i.e. the mission to be the decisive force in the struggle against capitalist exploitation, the leader of the socialist revolu-

tion, and the ruling class in the socialist society which fights with the greatest resolution for the realization of the classless society).

The working class does not own any means of production and is therefore forced to sell its labour force. That is the objective economic condition of its decisive hostility towards exploitation and towards the social order which engenders it. The working class is not burdened with the psychology of private ownership (which to a certain extent stamps the mentality of the middle classes), and therefore is the most revolutionary force within the capitalist society.

The working class is the creator of the basic values produced by capitalist society, it creates the surplus-value which results in the increased value of capital which is then appropriated by the capitalists who are thus enabled to continue their exploitation. At the same time it is linked with the most progressive technology above all with the factory and industrial production in general. Its immediate interest is therefore the development of technology, the improvement of the most advanced production processes, but in the conditions of capitalism it thus at the same time forges weapons which turn against it. Therefore the working class is the most progressive social class but it can assert its progressive qualities systematically only in conditions in which the private ownership of production means, as well as exploitation, has been abolished, that is, after obstacles to a continuous and even development of technology, production and productivity have been removed in favour of the immediate producers. For this reason the revolutionary clan of the working class is conditioned by its progressive quality.

The participation in work involving the most advanced technology and methods of production, means also, that the working class works in large teams. That creates objective conditions for the development of the further characteristics which determine the historic mission of the working class. The factory, as Lenin said, educates the workers to accept discipline, self-discipline and organization. In this the working class differs from the other groups in capitalism which work for the greater part alone or in small teams (e.g. part of the intelligentsia, small farmers, etc.). Collective work educates the work-

ing class also to become aware of common interests with other workers, and of the need for unity in action against the exploiting classes. Experiences gained in battles fought against the capitalists teach the workers that their strength lies, above all, in unity, in subordinating their personal interests to the interests of the whole class. In this way, class consciousness grows out of the objective conditions, as a result of the economic status of the working class, and out of the awareness of their common interests.

The objectively given conditions of the economic and social status of the working class also mould its class mentality and lead it to class awareness. Simultaneously, however, they create conditions which make the working class willing to accept progressive ideology, to become the systematic exponent of Marxism-Leninism. The pressure of class hostility and the intolerable position of the proletariat in the capitalist society give rise to various forms of resistance to the employers, the state authorities and in extreme cases to the whole regime. In this struggle the workers may reach the early stages of class militancy, but they are not capable of arriving at the socialist conviction that there is an irreconcilable conflict between their interest and the capitalist order, at the conviction that capitalism must be abolished, that a revolution and a socialist dictatorship is necessary. The status of the working class is such that spontaneously it inclines towards socialism. But socialist awareness could arise only when this spontaneous feeling and movement was put on a scientific foundation, when it united with scientific socialist theory. The Marxian proletarian parties are the embodiment of this unity of socialist theory and working class movement. The leadership of the masses consists in the purposeful guidance of the working class and the working masses by the party in the sense of the objectively given historical laws - towards socialism.

The Middle Classes of Capitalist Society:

The class structure of capitalist society does not consist of two classes only, of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. There exist also several other classes, the position of which is not so clearly defined as that of the two principal classes.

Among these strata the most numerous and the largest as to numbers, is the so-called small bourgeoisie (both urban and rural) and the intelligentsia.

The Petty Bourgeoisie, Rural and Urban (small tradesmen and shopkeepers, small and medium-sized farmers etc.) constitute, particularly in the early stages of capitalism, a fairly numerous group. Their basic economic characteristic is that they live predominantly on the proceeds of their own work (and that of their family), and that at the same time, they own means of production. This double aspect of their economic situation leads also to an ambiguity in their interest, political attitudes and ideology. As owners of means of production they try not only to preserve their wealth, but also to consolidate and increase it, to rise higher and thus to gain security. To a certain extent this binds them both politically and economically to the bourgeoisie. At the same time, however, people whose position in the competition struggle with the larger capitalists is weak, are led to oppose the bourgeoisie and the monopolies, who in the course of development of capitalism swallow them up wholesale turning them into proletariat.

This economic and class vacillation of interests leads also to political and ideological vacillation. For the working class and its party this means that they must be aware of the increasing differentiation within the small bourgeoisie and to lead, above all the poorest groups, to an awareness of their interests, which are, after all, antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie.

Intelligentsia is a social group which (in contrast to small bourgeoisie the number of which declines continuously) plays an increasingly important part as capitalist production develops, and its number are growing steadily. If the small bourgeoisie can be described above all in economic terms, the most essential feature of the intelligentsia is its function within the division of labour. Its essential characteristic is intellectual activity, conditioned by higher education and the separation of the intellectual from the physical work in the class society. That is, naturally, a characteristic which defines it only in general, from the point of view of its activity and not from the point of view of its economic position and class political interests.

If in the early stages of capitalism the absolute majority of the intelligentsia stemmed from the exploiting classes and was closely linked with them, then with the development of production and technology and the growing need of intellectual work even within the production process itself, the intelligentsia continues to differentiate. The decisive majority lives in economic and social conditions which approximate closely those of the proletariat. This part of the intelligentsia does not own the means of production, and the way and the amount they earn increasingly resembles that of the proletariat. Side by side with this ever growing part of the intelligentsia there exist also a part which lives in substantially better conditions and the situation of which approaches that of the smaller bourgeoisie, and finally there is the thin layer closely linked with the capitalists. Further on we shall discuss the effect of this process on contemporary capitalism. For the working class and its party it is important, above all, to seek contact with that part of the intelligentsia the social and economic situation of which most closely approximates that of the working class.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE FORM IT ASSUMES

"The history of all the societies up till now is a history of class struggle", wrote Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their Communist Manifesto. They had in mind the history of mankind since the emergence of class society, i.e. from the time that society became divided into the exploited and the exploiters.

Marx did not invent class struggle in order to find scientific support for his political conviction. Marx did not even discover it, class struggle was recognized and described long before him. Marx's merit lies in the fact that he proved conclusively that the division of society into classes is nothing "natural", "divine" or "eternal", but that it is the result of the economic situation people find themselves in. From their economic situation then springs the differences in economic interests, differences in the way of variety of thinking within classes, their ideology, moral opinions etc.

Class struggle is therefore an objective historical law which has its objective foundation in the contradiction of production relations and remains in effect as long as these objective differences are in

existence. For this reason class struggle is not only a question of subjective wishes, not merely a problem of an ethical character. Therefore it cannot be abolished by some kind of "humanitarian" measures, neither can there be a truce or alleviation of class struggle as long as there exist the objective contradiction which engender it.

Class struggle has been in existence throughout the period of history characterized by a division of society into classes. For a long time it had the character of an spontaneous struggle in which the suppressed classes aimed at the immediate improvement of their economic conditions.

Economic struggle is also one of the first forms of the class struggle of the proletariat. The working class fought to begin with by means of strikes and mass campaigns for the improvement of their economic situation, the raising of wages, shortening of working hours etc. But economic struggle, even though it is the earliest form of class struggle and is the immediate consequence of social contradictions and of the interests of the proletariat, by itself cannot lead to the economic liberation of the working class. The economic supremacy of the capitalists is conditioned by and continually renewed through their political power. For this reason political struggle for the overthrow of the political power of the bourgeoisie and the introduction of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the highest form of class struggle. Here no longer stands a fraction of a class against the fraction of another class, but the confrontation is between the classes as such. It is the Marxist party which leads the working class to become aware of the possibilities of the class struggle and the subordination of the economic struggle to political actions. The party provides the political organization and gives the working class its own ideology, i.e. the recognition of social laws, the realization of its own interest and the recognition of the goals and the means to be employed to reach these objectives. The economic, ideological and political struggle form a unity and culminate in a socialist revolution and the introduction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which overthrows the political and thereby also the economic supremacy of the bourgeoisie and thus creates conditions for the setting up of a classless, socialist society.

CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ADVANCED CAPITALIST COUNTRIES

The rapid development of technology and the introduction of the early stages of automation influences also the social structure and relations within the society in highly industrialized capitalist countries. This applies both to certain objective conditions of the various social classes, their work and thought.

It can be well understood that bourgeois ideology makes use of the new phenomena in the economic life of well-developed countries, of the changes in the composition and status of the working class for the advancement of theories which proclaim that class struggle has disappeared altogether, that all class antagonisms have been resolved and that the capitalist society either has reached or is on the way to accomplishing the ideal of a "classless society".

"Social stratification" is today one of the favourite subjects of bourgeois sociology. Many investigations of social stratification, status and opinions of the various strata are organized, hundreds of publications are published, the most varied theories advanced.

Bourgeois Sociology on the Social Structure of Contemporary Capitalism.

The method used by numerous investigations of social stratification is based on the subjectivist conception of the constitution of classes. It makes use of the fact that people are frequently not aware of their own class status and interest, that they react to their own economic status. What the subjectivist stratification theories and the investigations based on them regard as the decisive criterion of class-membership is personal or social valuation. Class membership is then determined by what an individual or groups of people think of themselves, or what other people think about them. Class as an objective social reality is thus identified with class awareness. The consequences of such theories are obvious: If there are factors at work which either obscure or decrease class consciousness, the decline of classes is diagnosed. And it is understandable that if class is defined subjectively, then class struggle takes place in the heads of people and can be changed at will by a change of feelings, by education etc.

These theories have their own old tradition, particularly in earlier American sociology. One of the "classics" of this type of investigation is the American sociologist Warner, whose studies had an influence on many other investigations of the class structure. A graphic example of this concept is the clearly subjectivist definition of class:

"By classes are understood two or three groups of people who believe that they are and actually are members of communities in socially superior or subordinate positions".⁶

He based his determination of the social hierarchy on the information given him by the members of the investigated community. At the same time, as other sociologists have pointed out, his informants were, for the greater part, members of the higher classes. Warner's structure then was actually only a reflection of the social stratification as it existed in the consciousness of the "elite" and not a description of objective reality.

Contemporary methods are frequently based on the same methodological subjectivist principle. For example, in 1959 the West German Institute for the Investigation of Middle Classes organized a research the results of which were published by H. Dahein.⁷

It is stated expressly that in the investigation the first objective was not to ascertain the social status (income, property, social origin, education etc.) but that in the fore-front of interest were the opinions which the inhabitants themselves held about their position in the social structure.

Similarly other authors designate their investigation of social stratification as psychological in character.⁸ They questioned several thousands of German Federal Republic citizens and found that only a small percentage professed to belong either to the higher or the lower classes. Only 1% of the representative group professed to belong to the higher classes. On the other hand, 73% of these investigated regarded themselves as being members of the middle classes.

Sociological investigations which use the subjectivist method are based, other consideration aside, on the erroneous idea that people are fully conscious of their class membership. Actually,

however, people are conscious only of some outer features rather than of the essence of their class stratification. The more likely are their opinions to be erroneously subjectivistically coloured if the investigator approaches them with the ready design into which he tries to fit the social groups using selected informants.

It is true that class membership moulds the characteristic features of class consciousness, attitudes, habits and mentality. But this coefficient - which is so clear as long as we have in mind whole classes, becomes more relative as soon as we begin to speak of the various members of the classes and in certain concrete conditions (as for example, during the prosperity of the contemporary well-developed states) it can even retreat into the background. In such conditions it is quite possible that an empirical investigation as to, for example, who regards himself as belonging to the middle class, will bring a large number of affirmative answers: But under other social economic conditions, as for example, when the economic contradictions are acute, the picture will be totally different.

The subjectivist psychological stratification investigations often serve only to document the most widely held contemporary bourgeois theory of a new middle class, based on investigation and statistical materials which reflect certain objectively given, particularly economic, factors.

The theory of a new middle class uses mostly objective economic data as argument. The subjective "self-assessment" or "recognition" by others only supplements the argument. At the same time they naturally repudiate the Marxist definition of classes. They regard it as a simplification and schematization of social structure. The position in production, the relation to the means of production does not, they contend, express the whole complex structure of modern society. They assert that for the contemporary structure of capitalist society various economic and social factors are decisive: income, consumption, prestige of the occupation engaged in, educational standard, etc. On the basis of statistic data and stratification investigation they then prove that in the advanced capitalist countries a levelling between classes occurs and that the majority of inhabitants can be, on the basis of their income and of other factors, regarded as belonging to the "new middle class".

The basic theoretical and methodological weakness of the theories involving "new middle class" is the failure to differentiate between social classes and social strata. It is true that the development of technology, mechanization, and automation of production introduces basic changes into the structure of the worker class and the character of the various types of employment. The transition between the social groups is much more flexible than was the case in the early stages of capitalism. But that does not mean that a new middle class is being created. Nobody doubts that the classification of the members of a community can be carried out from many points of view. And that even if we limit them to the social or the social economic point of view. Let us take into account the income approach: the sector comprising the category of the "new middle class" will include various occupations interwoven at various levels: qualified workers, part of the employee-category, shop assistants, etc. Thus, for example, some workers have a high wage and a style of life which fundamentally approaches that of the members of employments of a predominantly clerical character. In this respect there exists a considerable difference from the first stages of capitalism in which the differences between the working class and the other classes and strata were extremely well-defined.

The theory of the "new middle class" then identifies classes and strata and therefore cannot tell us anything of real importance concerning the actual class structure existing in a mature capitalist society. Their only political significance is, in their endeavour to prove that contemporary capitalism either already attained the stage of classless society or will soon do so.

Apart from the theories trying in various ways to prove that mature capitalism is a type of classless society, there exists also the reverse concept which invests classes and class struggle with an "eternal", a "permanent" character. One of the most logical is that of the West German sociologist, R. Dahrendorf.

R. Dahrendorf originally studied Karl Marx and still regards the class theory Marx propounded as the best presented thus far, but he tries to go beyond it. He recognizes the existence of classes and class struggles even in the most advanced capitalist countries. But he

does not regard as the decisive factor the relation to means of production but the power position, the participation in power or the exclusion from power. To quote Dahrendorf:

"Classes are conflicting social groups the determining foundation of which (and thereby also the differential specification) lies in the share in power or exclusion from power within the arbitrary bonds of sovereignty".⁹

Each society is, according to him, a structure of many unions of authority, among which the most important are the sphere of economy (industry) and politics (state authority). In both spheres the ruling class are those who have the power to decide and command others, who then make up the subordinated class. At the same time, the ruling and the subordinated classes need not necessarily be the same in both spheres. Dahrendorf quotes the example of the managers who are the governing class in industry but need not have any power in the political sphere.

Dahrendorf quotes Marx frequently. Thus, for example, Marx has several passages where he mentions the fact that the process of work intrinsically demands certain managing functions. Dahrendorf regards this as a proof of his idea, because where the directing functions are, where the leadership is, there must be also classes and a relationship of authority and obedience. They are therefore not of an economic character but are determined by differences in the extent of authority, and they must be approached and dealt with in that light. He, however, forgets an important statement by Marx:

"A capitalist is not a capitalist only because he manages an industrial enterprise, but rather he becomes an industrial leader because he is a capitalist. Highest power in industry becomes an attribute of capital, the way highest power in the army and in the judiciary in the feudal era was an attribute of land ownership".¹⁰

Dahrendorf's theory of classes and class conflict reflects certain contradictions which operate in the advanced capitalist countries, and in some of the new economic phenomena (e.g. the growing importance and powers of decision held by the executives and directors of plants). Its basic defect is the assumption that economic and political interests are so separated that the political sphere is not concerned with the promotion of economic goals and interests. This is linked with another methodological weakness,

namely the description of a class as a purely power group. Since in the system of the existing division of labour there must always be a group which makes decisions (if absolute anarchy is not to prevail), he regards classes as a permanent category. And since he links the existence of classes systematically with class struggle, then he regards also class struggle as eternal. In this respect he does not differentiate even between capitalist and socialist countries. His ideas then lead to an absurdity: in spite of agreeing with Marx's pattern of class structure with its two basic classes, he regards society as a conglomerate of classes in various spheres of social life, and thus he finally identifies all social strata and groups with classes, in spite of the fact that he himself reproaches other sociologists for making the same mistake.

Social Structure of Contemporary Capitalism. It is not easy to give an accurate picture of the social structure of highly developed capitalist countries. As far as facts are concerned, particularly the statistical data, we have to rely on official statistics. And these, naturally, are not based on Marxist class classification. On the contrary the system of classification used is frequently based on employment, and often on external features, as when, for example, the type of reward for work performed is taken as a criterion. Thus, to mention an example, the term "employees" is very ambiguous, both as to content and extent, for it makes possible also the inclusion of some of the members of the working class in this category. Similarly the category "independent" may include groups as economically and socially divergent as green grocers and large industrialists. The real social structure can be camouflaged even if the tables are supplemented by statistics giving the rate of incomes. The incomes are usually computed on the basis of income-tax returns, which lowers substantially the actual incomes of the highest classes, while, on the other hand, the total percentage of the lowest classes may be diminished (e.g. unemployed). Apart from that, the income groups are given in larger groups so that under the heading of one social group a great variety of incomes may be included. Apart from that, income by itself is not a sufficient criterion for class analysis.

In spite of that, however, taking the official statistics as published by the capitalist authorities - especially if we approach them in an appropriately critical spirit - a certain picture of the real structure of the capitalist countries reveals itself. And that shows that the progress of technology in the advanced capitalist countries is reflected also in the social structure, introducing certain new element both into the character of the various classes themselves and into the relation between the classes, but that nothing has changed in the basic class character of capitalism where there continue to exist the two main classes - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Bourgeoisie. What is then the social structure of advanced capitalist countries, of what main classes and strata does it consist, and what is the status of these classes and layers?

It cannot be doubted that in advanced capitalist countries certain changes are taking place in the significance of the ownership of means of production with regard to the decisions on production, distribution, management, etc. This phenomenon is an expression of a certain separation of ownership and control of the means of production. The "family firm" uniting ownership with the actual execution of the management, decision-making and disposition functions, was characteristic of early west-European capitalism. The rise of share-holding companies, the growth of monopoly, cartels and trusts became a typical feature from the second half of the nineteenth century onward. Private ownership in the sense of ownership by an individual in view of the volume of production ceases to have the form typical of the first stage of capitalism, in a sense it becomes "group" ownership, though inside the group of "owners" different degrees of power exist. At the same time the separation of the majority of owners from direct production takes place. The owners become mere shareholders who live on their dividends and stock market speculation. The "idle class" emerges. This class retain considerable political power, but its direct influence on production declines, the shareholders neither direct production, nor do they influence, what will be produced, and how and what will be the division of functions and incomes within the plant. For many people shares become a means of investment of money at a high rate of interest, and for the majority of share-holders, this income provides a welcome addition to their normal income.

The changes in the function of direct ownership of the means of production in relation to the management of production and decisions on production do not tell us anything about the dwindling of the classes holding economic power. The fact remains that it is the capitalists and above all the financial oligarchy which decides about production and the policy pursued by the capitalist countries. It is not decisive whether they themselves direct the production process or if they do so through their directors, managers or even, in the state monopoly stage of capitalism, through the "state". The progressive American sociologist Charles Wright Mills proved in his work, "The Power Elite",¹¹ using convincing material that the idea that in the U.S.A. there does not exist a group which holds power positions permanently in its hands is erroneous. He disproves both the theory of "new middle class" and the ideological concept of the "democratisation of capitalism". The "economic sphere", Mills says, "which had once consisted of a large number of small and independent production units has come under the domination of 200-300 gigantic connection with the economy".¹²

The official bourgeois statistics likewise prove that there exist two, on the whole contradictory, tendencies in the development of the capitalist class. On the one hand the number of this class in relation to the number of inhabitants decrease, on the other, their share in the total social product rises.

Let us view, for example, the trends as reflected by the G.F.R. official statistics concerning the development of the number of independent inhabitants (i.e. people who are not in an employee relationship, that is, predominantly capitalists) for the years 1882-1956:

Percentage of "independent" of the total number of earners

1882	1895	1907	1925	1933	1939	1946	1950	1956
25,4	23,3	18,8	15,9	16,4	14,6	17,8	15,5	13,5

The table shows clearly a permanent trend towards decreasing the number of capitalists, the result of the concentration of capital in the monopolist stage of capitalism.

Another table, containing the official data from the same state proves another tendency, namely that the share of the large and the largest plants in the total number of the capitalists is increasing. Again data from G.F.R. are presented:¹³

		Industrial plants total		Smaller Medium plants		Larger Medium size plants		Large plants	
				earners		earners		earners	
				1-9	10-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500-999
No. of Plants	1952	91 825	42 285	31 315	8 313	4 813	3 317	991	792
Changes 1952-57	1959	92 208	41 216	29 211	9 179	5 811	4 279	1 379	1 091
		+ 0,4	- 2,5	- 3,5	+10,4	+20,8	+29,0	+38,8	+37,8

It is evident from the table that while the number of plants employing up to 50 people declined in the given period, the number of plants which have more than 50 employees has risen, the largest percentual growth being for the largest plants, with over 500 and over 1000 employees.

With this is also linked the growth of income of largest monopolies. Here again the official statistics prove that an ever smaller number of the largest capitalist magnates.

According to the official data of the Ministry of Finances of the U.S.A., in the 1946-1947 years roughly 300 thousand million dollars, i.e. almost a half of the national wealth of the country, belonged to 1,250,000 people who make up only 0.8% of inhabitants. In 1950 1% of inhabitants of U.S.A. owned already 55% and in recent years, 50% of all the wealth of the country. At the same time, 87% of the inhabitants, i.e. the working people of America, own only 8% of the national wealth.¹⁴

Similar situation obtains also in other capitalist countries, Thus, for example, in Britain, roughly 1% of the inhabitants own 50% of the total national wealth.

The bourgeois stratification theory, which attempts to prove that in advanced capitalist countries the richest social class diminished numerically is right only in this limited sense. But it likewise confirms the Marxist-Leninist thesis concerning the character of the monopoly stage of capitalism, for the share of the national wealth of this group increases as their numbers decrease.

The monopolist stage of capitalism increases also the contradictions within the bourgeoisie itself. But contradictions within the bourgeoisie always were and always will be the consequence of the capitalist production process, based on private ownership, on the unrestrained operation of the law of supply and demand and therefore on competition. Every capitalist is naturally concerned in the first place with the retaining and extension of his own enterprise, the obtaining of the largest profit, and he is not in any way concerned if on his way to these goals he destroys other capitalists. The monopolist stage of capitalism further intensifies these contradictions between the monopolies of the various capitalist countries and the economic interests of the capitalist states.

The contradiction within the bourgeoisie cannot, however, solve the basic contradiction of capitalism, the contradiction between capital and labour, nor all the other contradictions which are the result of the capitalist method of production. On the contrary, the development of these contradictions and all the efforts to solve them only deepen the basic economic contradictions of capitalism. This is the result of the fact that these contradictions are not decisive in the capitalist society, that they are only the by-product of the economic contradictions of capitalism itself. In spite of the contradictions and conflict of interests of the various capitalists, monopolies, unions of monopolies and capitalist states, there predominates between them unity of interests, a multilateral bond and above all, the common interest of preserving the capitalist order. Even though the capitalists fight each other, even though they rob each other and the stronger destroys the weaker, they are united in the support of exploitation, of capitalism and their resistance to the working class and naturally to socialism. Therefore the contradictions of the capitalist society cannot be solved by the capitalist class itself or any of its part, but by that class which stands against capitalism, against the bourgeoisie - the working class. For that reason the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat remains the basic contradiction of capitalism.

In the struggle against colonialism, in the anti-imperialist fight, against political and economic supremacy of the imperialists and for national independence, an important part is played also by the so-called

"national bourgeoisie" of the former enslaved countries exploited by capitalists powers. Even though in the national liberation struggle the national bourgeoisie frequently plays a progressive role, it does not aim at the liquidation of private ownership and of exploitation. But their participation in this struggle means a weakening of the imperialist camp and they are likely to become allies of the socialist countries in peaceful competition.

The Working Class. Likewise the working class is passing through changes in contemporary capitalism. Both its class-consciousness and its revolutionary experience is growing. The inner structure is also changing in number and strength. What is not changing is the class character, the basic characteristic features.

Industrial workers make up the nucleus of the working class. But agricultural workers, artisans and other groups belong to it likewise.

Let us ask first: what is the contemporary numerical state of the working class and what tendencies prevail in this respect, whence comes the influx into this class and what is its social and economic status.

We shall again base our account predominantly on official statistics. For the moment we shall pass by the problem of "employees", a number of whom, as we shall show further on, because of their social and economic status, really belong to the working class.

Let us make a similar comparison as with the capitalist class. Percentage of workers among the wage-earners in the G.F.R., 1882-1956:

1882	1895	1907	1925	1933	1939	1946	1950	1956
49,4	49,7	47,2	46,0	46,3	50,8	47,1	51,9	54,5

The tendencies of development in recent years show that there is a rapid decline of the numbers of rural proletariat, while there is a numerical increase of the industrial proletariat. This is connected, naturally, with the tremendous technical development in advanced capitalist countries and the "industrialization" of a number of

branches. Not only factory workers, but workers in many other branches make up the industrial proletariat. Under the heading of industrial proletariat must also be included the workers of the metallurgical and building industry, of transport and communications, because an ever-growing circle of the branches of material production is, in contemporary conditions, attaining an industrial character.

Thus official statistics show that, for example, in the U.S.A. the number of the proletariat in the 1879-1950 years almost doubled, while the number of the agricultural proletariat declined from 29% to 4.3%. In France the number of people working in industry rose in 1958 by 1 million as compared with 1908,

This is borne out also by the data which record the sources of the growth of the working class. It appears that the influx into the working class comes, above all, from agriculture and small production and also to a certain extent, women are a source of growth of the working class.

In the U.S.A., the number of agricultural workers and foremen on farms has dropped from 4.7 millions in 1910 to 3.1. million in 1940 and 2.9 million in 1956. Their percentage in all the income earning inhabitants was: 1910-13%; 1940-7%; 1956-4.5%.

In Britain the total number of people employed in agriculture is roughly 4% of all the work force. The number of hired workers has declined substantially, mostly due to mechanization.

Likewise small-scale production is one of the constant sources of the growth of the working class.

In the U.S.A. the number of farmers is declining steadily. In 1910, 6,100,000 farmers made up 17% of all the income earning inhabitants. By 1940 their numbers declined to 5.1 million, i.e. 11%. At the beginning of 1950 there were, in the U.S.A., only 3.6 million, that is, 6% of the income-earning inhabitants.

In the German Federal Republic the number of workers is also growing, the influx coming mostly from the farming classes. Between the years of 1950/51 until 1957/58 the number of members of farming families permanently employed in agriculture declined from 4.4 million to 3.3 million.

The number of farmers who are forced to increase their incomes by hiring out their own labour has increased considerably. Within two

years (1954-56), the percentage of these farmers in the total number of farming units grew from 29.8% to 32.8%. Likewise urban small-scale production is being proletarianized increasingly. In 1949 there were in the German Federal Republic 863,000 craft trade workshops. By 1958 their number declined to 750,000. Therefore 12% of the trade workshops have become victims of monopolies.

Likewise women remain a constant source of the growth of the working class in the capitalist countries, mainly because they are cheap working force. In the German Federal Republic women formed 31% in 1951 of the total number of workers, in 1958 already 34%. In Austria the number of women employed in industry has increased in 1960 by 110,000 as against 1937 etc.

Even though statistics show a numerical growth of the working class and particularly of the industrial proletariat, the actual numbers do not naturally determine the strength of the working class and its ability to fulfil its historical mission. What counts is the extent to which it is organized, its role in the economy of the country, its unity with the other working people and the international constellation of forces.

The technical development of the central capitalist powers, results in better material conditions for the working class, which, to a certain extent influences its class consciousness. But facts show that this applies only to a thin layer of the working class, and that the development of mechanization and automation has also strong negative implications for the working class of these countries. This has been confirmed by the discussion of the composition and status of the working class in contemporary capitalism, which took place in 1961 on the pages of the journal, "Problems of Peace and Socialism".

With the changes in the social structure and the status of the working class in mature capitalist countries there comes to the fore the problem of the character and role played by the so-called "workers aristocracy". In describing the workers aristocracy, V.I. Lenin emphasized above all two aspects: in the first place he analysed concretely and in historical context its social economic status. From that point of view the working class aristocracy is a privileged, the best paid and frequently the best qualified layer of

the working class, particularly so in the countries which themselves had a privileged position in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, as for example Britain - the largest colonial state. The actual material situation of the working class aristocracy which differed from the conditions of life under which the mass of the proletariat lived, helped to make it the platform from which bourgeois ideology could be expanded inside the working class and the working class movement itself, the more so that, as a rule, this aristocracy stood at the head of opportunistic socialist parties and trade unions. The second aspect emphasized by Lenin is that the working class aristocracy is linked with the bourgeois policy of infiltrating the working class movement.

The concrete historical analysis of contemporary capitalism shows that the social economic conditions which gave birth to the working class aristocracy have changed substantially. In the majority of advanced capitalistic states the working class aristocracy is on the decline, both numerically and as far as its significance goes. It attained its privileged situation and better conditions of life by agreement with the capitalists rather than by class struggle. Therefore those workers who by a purposeful class struggle achieve higher wages cannot be regarded as belonging to the working class aristocracy. "The tenacious struggle of the working class of the various countries has resulted in the satisfaction of a number of pressing needs" stated the declaration of the representatives of the communist and working-class parties in November 1960, and this was made possible by the growing strength of the working class and the working class movement.

Such workers then, even though they belong to the relatively better paid categories of the proletariat, cannot be regarded as the working-class aristocracy. The disintegration of the colonial system means also that the monopoly bourgeoisie cannot retain as numerous a group of privileged workers as was the case, for example, in Great Britain, prior to the first world war. The guild and caste trade union organizations which were a preserve of the working class aristocracy have disappeared almost everywhere. The development of the class struggle has turned the trade union organization into mass organizations associating millions of workers.

The main prop of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement is at present increasingly the working class bureaucracy. This consists, above all, of the top echelons of trade union leaders and part of the officers of the reformist trade unions and parties, and various reformist officials, who have captured power positions, and reformist in the executive and control councils of various societies.

The Middle Classes in Contemporary Capitalism. The Intelligentsia and "Employees" - Their Relations towards the Working Class. It cannot be doubted that technical development and the competition of mammoth plants continually decreases the number of small independent producers. This fact is being confirmed by official statistics concerning the class composition of inhabitants within the capitalist classes, and it cannot be denied even by bourgeois sociologists. They nevertheless assert that the old middle class, represented mainly by small independent producers is being replaced by a "new middle class" which belongs neither to the bourgeoisie nor to the proletariat, and which both the level of its income and the method of remuneration and the style of life, forms a certain middle belt of society, numerically decisive and growing steadily. This "new middle class" is said to consist mainly of the intelligentsia and the so-called "employees".

Statistical data actually confirm that the number of employees and of intelligentsia in the advanced capitalist countries is growing both absolutely and in relation to the rural and urban small producers. Thus, to quote an example, the relation between the "new" and the "old" middle classes in the U.S.A. has changed in the last eighty years as follows:¹⁵

	In percentages			
	1870	1910	1950	1954
Urban and rural small bourgeoisie	38,5	26,0	13,3	11,9
Employees and intelligentsia	7,7	17,2	30,2	32,2

The West German sociologist, L. Neundorfer,¹⁶ shows this trend in the development of the numbers of employees and clerical workers in Germany:

Employees and Officials			Employees	
Year	Number	% of income-earners	Number	% of income-earners
1882	830,900	5	307,300	1.9
1895	2,115,000	10.7	621,000	3.1
1907	2,870,000	11.7	1,290,000	5.2
1925	5,535,000	17.3	3,500,000	10.9
1933	5,612,000	17.4	4,103,000	12.7
1939	6,481,000	18.9	4,663,000	13.6

Only G.D.R.

1946	3,968,000	20.7	3,325,000	17.4
1950	4,402,000	19.9	3,523,000	15.9
1957	5,423,000	22.4	-	-

This trend is also confirmed by other statistical data.

Example in 1950-51 the ratio between income earners doing "clerical" and "manual" work was as follows:

U.S.A.	66:100
Sweden	49:100
Great Britain	46:100
Austria	40:100

These tables are based on the category of "employees" as understood by the western sociologists and the bourgeois statistics. It is necessary to remark that the definition of the category is not clear and is still a subject of much discussion. The fact remains that as technology develops there are fewer occupations which have a completely or predominantly manual character and in that sense also the number of "employees" rises.

The way the number of employees has grown in recent years is shown by the fact that in the U.S.A. from 1947-1957 the number of employees grew, when compared with the growth in the number of workers, 15 times as fast, in Britain from 1948-1958 in the processing industry the number of administrative technical and office workers grew by 45%, while the number of workers only by 5%.

What Are The Main Reasons For This Situation:

1. The growing number of employees is in the first place the result of the development of the production forces of well-

developed capitalist countries, the growing division of labour, and the advancing process of concentration and centralisation of production. Simultaneously there grows the extent of non-productive branches of production. The capitalist market system leads to the development of those branches which mediate trade, (insurance companies, advertising etc.). According to official statistics for example, in 1956 more than 4,000 million DM were spent on advertising in the German Federal Republic.

The further growth of class contradiction leads to an intensification of the suppression machinery (state apparatus, bourgeois party organizations, organizations, unions and similar institutions, police, army etc.).

2. The introduction of new technology leads to the transition of many workers into the "employee", with corresponding form of rewarding and other aspects of work relations. To quote an example, the Internationale Büro-Maschinen Gesellschaft (IBM) of the German Federal Republic transferred on 1st September 1958 all the workers are employed into an employee category. These changes are, to a certain extent, only a tactical move, which is to disguise the real class relationships, to create in the workers the illusion that they are being put on the same level as the white-collar workers. All this is connected with the previously mentioned concern for "human relations" or with the "social partnership" movement.
3. In connection with automation growth the need of engineers and technicians who are, in statistics, designated as clerical workers and employees, at the same time the mechanization and automation of direction and administration work results in a change in the character of this work. Apart from a limitation of the number of employees necessary for administration and direction, the number of employees who are actually doing the work of mechanics and electrical engineers etc. grows continually.

And thus actually a large number of administrative employees has been replaced by qualified workers, though in the statistics they are still entered under the heading "employees".

4. Finally, the bourgeois statistics give under the heading of the "employee category" very varied occupations ranging from watchwomen and watchmen etc. to the directors and the executives of the various plants. And yet the only feature all these employees have in common is the method of rewarding, and in some cases, the character of the work.

In analyzing the social structure of contemporary capitalism we are concerned in the first place with the determination of its inner differentiation, its relations, or else with the relation of their various components to the other social groups, and above all its relation to the working class.

Who belongs actually to the very variegated group of "employees?" All the sociologists who have dealt with this problem agree that a definition and a more accurate demarcation of the "employee" group is very difficult. In the vertical division, among "employees" are both the managers, the directors of mammoth plants, and their errand boys, State Secretaries and their secretaries. In a horizontal division, this category encompasses a number of the most varied branches, ranging from civil servants of industrial employees, from business employees to bank officials etc.

It is obvious that employees are not a class and even if they do form a certain social category, they are united more by external characteristics than by those which are decisive for social (the less for class) structure.

In contemporary capitalism, as a result of monopolisation and of the state monopoly character of imperialism on the one hand, and the influence of mechanization and automation on the other hand, a considerable part of the employed people has no characteristics differentiating them from the proletariat, the numbers of the proletariat continually grow, as does the proportion of those employed in non productive spheres of human activities. This applies partly also to the so-called "employees". Those categories which sell all their labour force to the capitalists, include ordinary engineers, technicians,

salesmen, the staff working the computers, workers in the various services etc. Their working hours may be divided into work and surplus labour, their work is productive, and is a source of profit for the capitalist. As a rule their incomes are no higher than the incomes of the worker:

"As an example may be taken the year 1952 when the average income of the employees in the United States was roughly 96% of the average wage of the worker. In 1957 employees in financial institutions in the United States received 10% less than factory workers and trade employees received 16% less".¹⁷

It can be said that the majority of employees belong to the proletariat of the capitalist countries, even though they naturally cannot be identified with the industrial proletariat which forms the hard-core of the working class. Naturally those "employees" who work in the top echelons of the capitalists plants and monopolies, or the servants of the bourgeois state performing political and military political functions, cannot be regarded as belonging to the proletariat.

The social role of a certain class or strata depends on its objective social economic status but also on the way it is aware of its status and of the resultant social mission. It remains a fact that this subjective aspect lags in the consciousness of the majority of employees behind the changes in the objective status. The objective reason for this contradiction is that the character of their work still usually differs from the character of the work of the majority of workers. But whether these employees realize it or not, the fact remains that their social and economic status for the greater part places them into the category of the working class. It is the prime task of the working classes to guide the mass of employees towards the realization of this fact.

At the same time a great part of the "employees", particularly when the political and economic situation is unequivocal, realize the unity of their interests with the interests of the working class and manifest this in action. In many popular large campaigns which took place in recent years in various capitalist countries, France, Belgium, Italy, Japan, Argentina and elsewhere, the greater part of the employees fought side by side with the industrial proletariat.

Development in advanced capitalist countries therefore shows that the social economic frontiers of the working class are being extended and that even part of the employees are becoming part of the working class. In an understanding of this reality the Marxist concept of the working class as a socially complex worker is of importance. "Complex worker" represents a work grouping combined in such a manner that the various members are nearer or closer to the immediate influence on the work object. In other words, the "complex worker" includes both those engaged in manual work (non qualified workers and workers servicing the machines) and those who put their intellectual work into the creation of the product or carry out various auxilliary function, without which the production process could not take place. Since division of labour continues to develop and that not only within the framework of the individual plant, but on the scale of the whole society, ever new occupations and new economic branches are emerging. Simultaneously with this the composition of the "complex worker" is also being extended.¹⁸

It is therefore evident that Marx already knew that with the development of capitalism the concept of the complex worker and therefore also the extent of the working class would become more comprehensive. This is confirmed by other aspects of the process of development of capitalist production as well, likewise pointed out by Marx. Thus, above all, the concept of productive labour itself is not settled once for all, but continues to develop and expand. The division of the various types of work among various people, characteristic for capitalism, does not stand in the way of the fact that the material product is the product of the common work done by many people. All the people involved not only take an immediate part in the production of material wealth, but they also exchange directly their labour for money, capital, and therefore they reproduce not only their wages but immediately also the surplus value for the capitalist.

It therefore appears that the proletariat is a complex social organism, consisting of many strata and of various groups working in the various branches they are employed in. As a rule, when using the term proletariat or working class, we have in mind its

main and decisive part - industrial or factory proletariat. There is a good reason for this, for the industrial proletariat forms the core of the working class, which is most revolutionary politically, and has the highest ideological and class awareness. But even the term, industrial proletariat, is being extended, because with the advancement of technology a number of new branches are assuming the factory form.

The development of capitalistic production is wiping out the differences between the manual workers and the engineering technical staff and the office and trade employees. The majority of these work for wages for the capitalists, share in the production of value and surplus value and are exploited.

But neither can it be denied that there are differences both in the status, but especially in the class-awareness of the core of the working class and as compared with the other groups. Thus many of the engineering and technical workers have a privileged status. They are involved directly in the preparation and coordination of the working processes within the plant, they prepare the technical equipment and control the processes. The commercial and office employees have likewise specific features which make it difficult for them to understand their objective social status. They are concerned with the redistribution of the surplus value created in other spheres etc.

An analysis of the structure of contemporary capitalism shows that in the advanced capitalist states class differences do not disappear. It is true that the numbers of the bourgeoisie decline, but at the same time the share of this diminishing class in the total national income increases. The process is just the reverse with the proletariat. The numbers of small producers and above all, of small farmers and agricultural workers decline. The numbers of the so-called "employees" are growing, but this group can by no means be called a "class". A concrete analysis of the social and economic status of its various components is necessary to ascertain their actual relationship to the basic classes of capitalism and above all, to the working class. Even in the advanced capitalist states the historical mission of the working class (and primarily of its nucleus) under the guidance of the party

remains: to guide the masses of the working people in the struggle against exploitation, to work for the implementation of the socialist revolution and the building of a classless society.

FOOTNOTES:

¹K. Marx, F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. II

²V.I. Lenin, The Great Initiative, Prague, 1946, p. 5.

³Karl Marx, F. Engels: Manifesto of the Communist Party.

⁴Ibid p. 25

⁵Problems of Peace and Socialism, No 5/1961, p. 84

⁶Warner, Lunt, The Social Life of Modern Community, 1911 p. 82.

⁷H. Daheir, Die Vorstellungen von Mittelstand, Kolner Zeitschrift fur Sociologie und Socialps Chologie, 1960, p. 237-269

⁸See the article, H. Moore, G. Kleining, Das Soziale Selbstbild der Gesellschaftschichten in Deutschland, ibid, 1960, p. 86-119.

⁹R. Dahrendorf, Soziale Klassen und Klassenkonflikt in der industriellen Gesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1957, p. 139.

¹⁰Karl Marx, Capital, I p. 358

¹¹Ch. W. Mills, The Power Elite New York, 1956

¹²Ibid, p. 28

¹³According to "Der Volkswirt" n 48/1959, p. 2398

¹⁴Based on V.S. Semionor "Theory of the Social Structure of Capitalism", volume - Marxism and Contemporary Bourgeois Sociology, 1963, p. 214 and following.

¹⁵Transactions of the Third Congress of Sociology, Vol.III p. 70

¹⁶L. Neuendorfer, Die Angestellten, Neuer Versuch einer Standortbestimmung, Stuttgart, 1961

¹⁷Problems of Peace and Socialism, No. 5/1960, p. 52.

¹⁸Problems of Peace and Socialism, No. 9/1961, p. 65.