

# IDEOLOGY IN GENERAL

By KARL MARX and FRIEDRICH ENGELS

*[The following passage has been taken from the recently-published volume of the Complete Works of Marx and Engels entitled "Die Deutsche Ideologie" (German Ideology). "Die Deutsche Ideologie" was begun in the spring of 1845, in Brussels, by Marx and Engels jointly, with a view, as Marx wrote later in his "Critique of Political Economy," "to work out together the contrast between our view and the idealism of German philosophy, in fact to settle our accounts with our former philosophical conscience (Hegelianism)." The plan was carried out in the form of a criticism of post-Hegelian philosophy. The work was prepared for publication in 1846, but owing to the opposition of both the police and the tendencies which Marx and Engels were attacking, nothing came of it, and except for a section published in 1847 and odd fragments issued since their death, the work has lain for 86 years, to be published in a complete form by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in 1932. The passage given below is from the first part of the first section, devoted to Feuerbach. It has been specially translated for the LABOUR MONTHLY from the definitive German edition published as the fifth volume of the first section of the Complete Works of Marx and Engels.]*

**T**HE premises from which we start are not arbitrary, they are not dogmas; but real premises which can only be evaded in the realms of imagination. They consist of real beings, their behaviour and the material conditions in which they live, both those pre-existing them and those produced by their own actions. It follows that these premises can be verified in a purely empirical manner.

The basic premise underlying all human history is naturally the existence of living human beings. The first point to ascertain, therefore, is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature conditioned thereby. We cannot in this place enter upon a discussion either of the physical constitution of human beings or of the pre-existing natural conditions of their environment, that is to say, the geological, oro-hydrographical and climatic conditions among others. All historical study must proceed from these basic conditions and their modification in the course of history through the actions of human beings.

Human beings may be distinguished from animals by their consciousness, religion, or how you will; but they begin to distinguish themselves from animals immediately they start producing their means of existence, a step conditioned in them by their physical organisation. In producing their means of existence human beings indirectly produce their material life itself.

The manner in which men produce their means of existence is dependent in the first place on the nature of those original means of existence that require reproduction. This mode of production must not only be considered in the sense that it constitutes the reproduction of man's physical existence. On the contrary it is rather a definite kind of human activity, a definite expression and mode of life itself. As individuals express their life, so they exist. What a man is, therefore, is coincident with his production, inseparable both from what he produces and how he produces it. What human beings are, in short, depends on the material conditions of their production.

This production first takes place with the increase in population. Again, it itself pre-supposes a mutual intercourse between men. The form of this intercourse, also, is conditioned by production.

The relations of different countries to each other depend on the extent each one has developed its forces of production, division of labour and internal trade. This is universally admitted. But not only the relation of one country to another, but the whole internal structure of the country itself depends upon the stage of development of its production and of its home and foreign trade. The degree to which a country's division of labour is developed provides the best indication of the stage of its production. Every new productive force in so far as it is not simply a quantitative extension of productive forces already existing (putting land under cultivation, for instance) brings with it a new development in the division of labour.

The division of labour within a country first leads to a separation between industrial and commercial labour on the one hand and agricultural labour on the other which leads next to a separation of town and country and an antagonism of their interests. Further development in the division of labour separates commercial from industrial labour. At the same time, as a consequence of this division of labour there develops in the different branches of production further distinct divisions among the individuals co-operating on definite tasks. The relation between these separate departments is determined by the various modes of agricultural, industrial and commercial labour (Patriarchalism, Slavery, Estates, Classes). The same relationships are to be observed under conditions of more highly-developed trade in the connection between countries.

The various stages of development in the division of labour are so many different forms of property; that is to say, each separate stage in the division of labour determines the relationships of men to each other as regards the material, the instrument and the product of labour.

The original form of property is tribal property. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production where a tribe exists by hunting,

fishing, cattle-rearing, or, in the most advanced period, by agriculture. In this last case tribal property pre-supposes the existence of much uncultivated land. Division of labour is still rudimentary at this stage and confines itself to an extension of the division of labour naturally inherent in the family. The social structure, therefore, goes no further than an extension of family relations : a patriarchal chief, under him the tribe members, and lastly, the slaves. Slavery, latent in the family, develops gradually with the increase of population and the multiplication of its needs and with the growth of external intercourse, either through war or trade by barter.

The second form of property is the communal and State property of classical times ; a form which develops from several tribes uniting, either through treaty or conquest, into a city, and which retains slavery. Along with the communal form of property there comes into being movable (and later, also, fixed) private property, but as an abnormal form, subordinate to communal property. The citizens only possess power over their slaves by their association in a community, and are in consequence bound to the communal form of property. We have to do here with the communal private property of the active citizens, who are compelled to remain at this primitive level of association to secure themselves in the face of their slaves. Then decay of the entire social structure built upon this form of property, and with it the decline of the people's power, sets in in proportion, above all, as private fixed property develops. The division of labour is already more highly developed. We already find antagonism between town and country ; later there arises antagonism between countries representing town and agricultural interests and, in the town itself, antagonism between industrial and maritime interests. The class relationship between citizens and slave has attained its complete form.

The factor of conquest seems to contradict this entire conception of history, for up to now it has been the custom to represent force, war, devastation and robbery with murder as the motive powers of history. We must confine ourselves here to the main points, so we shall take only one striking example, the destruction of an old civilisation by a barbarous people and the emergence therefrom of a new structure of society beginning at the beginning (Rome and the Barbarians, Feudalism and the Gauls, the Byzantine Empire and the Turks). With the conquering Barbarians war itself is still, as we have previously stated, a regular form of intercourse exploited by them the more keenly the more the growth of population within their traditional—and for them the one possible—mode of production creates the need for new means of production. In Italy, on the other hand, the free population had almost entirely disappeared, while the slaves were always dying out and in need to be

replaced. This was caused by a concentration of landed property due not only to buying up and debt but also to inheritance as, owing to their great debauchery and the rarity of marriage among them the old families gradually died out and their possessions accumulated in the hands of a decreasing few. At the same time this property had become transformed into pasture land, because, besides the usual economic reasons still valid to-day, the importation of plundered and tribute corn had led to a scarcity of consumers for Italian corn. Slavery remained the basis of all production. The plebeians with their status between freemen and slaves never rose above the condition of a lumpen proletariat. Rome never really emerged out of the City state and was not much more than politically connected with the Provinces, a connection, naturally, which could equally well be severed by political events.

With the development of private property there first arise those same conditions we shall find obtaining, though on a much larger scale, with modern private property. On the one hand there is the concentration of private property which began very early in Rome (witness the Licinian Land Law), and progressed rapidly after the civil wars and especially under the Caesars; on the other hand we see proceeding in connection with this the transformation of the plebeian small land-holders into a proletariat which, however, on account of its intermediate position between the property-owning citizens and the slaves had no independent development.

The third form of property is feudal property or property according to rank. Just as Antiquity took its point of departure from the town and its small surrounding territory, so the Middle Ages originated in the land. The population that existed there already, sparse and scattered over a wide area, a population that was never increased much by the conquering invaders, determined this different starting point. As opposed to the growth of Greece and Rome, Feudalism developed on a far more extensive land surface already prepared through the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first connected with them. The decay which occurred in the last centuries of the Roman Empire and the barbarian conquest itself combined to destroy a quantity of the forces of production; agricultural production had fallen off, industry had dwindled through lack of markets, trade was either dormant or forcibly suspended and the population of town and country had diminished. These pre-existing conditions and the method of organising the conquest conditioned by them led to the development, under the influence of the germanic military constitution, of the feudal form of property. This also was based as was that of tribal and communal property on a community, which stood opposed, not to slaves as in Antiquity but to the serf-class of small peasants as the direct producers. Simultaneously

with the complete establishment of Feudalism there arose the antagonism with the towns. The hierarchical structure of land property and the bands of armed retainers that were part and parcel of it gave the nobility power over the serfs. This feudal structure was just as much an association against the subjected class of producers as was that of the communal property of Antiquity; only the form of the association and its relation to the direct producers was different owing to the different conditions of production.

To this feudal structure of land property there corresponded in the towns corporative property, the feudal organisation of handicraft. Property consisted here chiefly in the work of each individual. The need to associate against the robber bands of the nobles, the need for communal markets in a time when the artisan was also a merchant, the growing competition of serfs abandoning the land and flocking to the flourishing towns, the feudal structure of the entire country, combined to produce the Guilds. The gradually collected savings of separate craftsmen and their evenly maintained numbers, alongside the increasing population, led to the journeyman and apprentice relationship that brought into being a hierarchy in the towns similar to that prevailing in the country.

Property, therefore, in the feudal epoch, existed chiefly on the one hand in land property with its fettered serf labour and on the other hand in personal labour with small capital disposing of journeyman labour. The structure of both forms was determined by the limited productive relations—insignificant crude agriculture and handicraft industry. Division of labour found but little place in the heyday of Feudalism. The antagonism between town and country existed in every country. Divisions according to rank were, it is true, very sharply demarcated, but apart from the distinction between princes, nobles, clergy and peasantry in the country, and masters, journeymen and apprentices, and soon the crowds of day-labourers, in the towns, no important division of labour was found. It was made difficult in agriculture because of the small-scale system of cultivation, besides which domestic industry grew up amongst the peasantry themselves. In industry there was never any division of labour within the separate handicrafts, and very little amongst them. The division of industry and commerce found in the ancient towns only developed in the newer ones later, when the towns entered into relations with one another.

The embracing of the larger districts into feudal kingdoms was necessary alike for the landed nobility and for the towns. It followed, therefore, that the organisation of the ruling class, that is to say, the nobles, had always a monarch at its head.

The fact is, then, as follows : individuals who are productively engaged in definite ways enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in every single instance demonstrate without any mystification or speculation the connection of the political and social structure with production. Social structure and the State constantly arise out of the processes of existence of definite people ; of people not as they may appear in their own or another's imagination, but as they really are, that is to say, as they work, as they produce material things, in short, as they act under determinate material limitations, premises and conditions—factors independent of their wills.

The production of ideas, conceptions, of consciousness, is directly bound up in the first place with the material activity and the material intercourse of mankind, with the speech of actual life. Conception, thought, the intellectual intercourse of men are thus seen as the direct product of men's material circumstances. The same is true of intellectual production as it is expressed in the language of the politics, law, ethics, religion and metaphysics of a nation. Human beings are the producers of their mental conceptions and ideas, but real, working human beings as they are determined by a definite development of their forces of production and the intercourse, up to its most advanced stages, arising therefrom. Consciousness (*"das Bewusstsein"*) can never be anything else but conscious being (*"das Bewusste Sein"*) and men's being is their actual process of existence. If people and the relations between them appear in all ideology upside-down as though in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical process of being, as the reversal of objects on the retina arises from their direct physical process of being.

By a practice exactly opposite to that of German philosophy, which comes down from the sky to earth, we here rise from the earth to the sky. That is to say, we do not proceed from what people say, imagine or pretend to themselves, and not from the discussed, thought-out, pictured, imagined person in order to arrive at the corporeal person ; but the point of departure will be the real, active person and out of his actual process of being will be represented the development of ideological reflexes and the echoes of this process of being. Even the phantasmagoria in men's brains are necessary sublimates of their material, empirically ascertainable process of existence, a process inseparably connected with material premises. Morals, religion, metaphysics and other ideology, together with the accompanying forms of consciousness, thus no longer here present the appearance of independence. They have no history and no development, but men, as they develop their material production and their material intercourse, change with this, their reality, their thought and the product of their thought. Consciousness does not determine



life, but life determines consciousness. In the first method of observation, one proceeds from consciousness considered as the living being; in the second, that corresponding to actual life, one proceeds from the real, living individual himself and considers consciousness only as *his* consciousness.

This latter method is not founded on air. It proceeds from the premises of real life; and never for a moment leaves them. Its premises are not men fixed in some fantastic seclusion, but men in their actual empirically observable process of development under definite conditions. Directly this active process of being is represented, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts, as it is with the empiricists who are themselves still abstract, or an imaginary play of imaginary subjects, as with the idealists.

There, where speculation ceases, when we come down to life itself, there begins real, positive science, the representation of practical activity, of mankind's practical processes of development. The phrases about consciousness cease, actual knowledge must take their place. With the representation of reality, self-sufficient philosophy loses its medium of existence. In its place there can, at best, be substituted a collection of the most general results which may be gathered from a study of the historical development of mankind. These abstractions in themselves, separated from actual history, are absolutely worthless. They can only serve to facilitate the ordering of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. They in no way present, as does philosophy, a recipe or formula for the fashioning of history. The difficulty here, begins precisely when one starts examining and putting in order the material either of a past epoch or of the present; when one starts on a real presentation. The overcoming of such difficulties is determined by premises which cannot be given at this stage, but which may only be yielded by study of the actual processes of existence and the actions of people of every epoch.

# THE FUTURE OF THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENTS

By J. R. CAMPBELL

**T**HE capitalist crisis continues to deepen in Great Britain. In spite of the fatuous talk of MacDonald about the "depression being arrested," in spite of the Bank chairmen's desperate attempts to find a basis for "moderate optimism" as to the immediate future, there is every signs that the crisis is deepening.

Production is falling steadily. One has got to go back 34 years to find production so low in the coal industry as it was in the last quarter of 1932. Foreign trade is steadily shrinking and in a series of industries new attacks on the workers are being prepared.

The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Herald* are seeking to mask this new offensive of the employing class by loud-mouthed advocacy of the "policy of high wages." None of those journals do anything with regard to helping the workers to meet a definite attack on their wages.

The *Herald* and the *Express* boycott the vital Irish strike news and so hinder the mobilisation of the British workers behind their Irish comrades in the struggle against wage-cuts.

But behind all this talk of the possibility of high wages in the midst of the deepening capitalist crisis, the employers' attack is developing. The Irish railway workers are being subjected to the most brutal attack; armed policemen protect scabs on buses, soldiers are paraded along the railway lines and at every railway station and the whole force of British Imperialism stands behind the Northern railway companies in the drive to enforce the full ten per cent. cut in wages.

A whole number of firms in the boot and shoe trade at Northampton prepare to scrap the existing agreement; the mineowners prepare to impose a further worsening of conditions on the miners. All this talk of high wages is simply a screen for the employers' preparations which are taking place.

In every struggle sections of reformist workers who have formerly displayed the utmost confidence in the leading officials are now coming out and playing a prominent part in the struggle against wage-cuts, and in the process are finding themselves more and more in opposition to the reformist policy pursued by those officials. This is particularly true in reference to the leading branch officials in a number of industries.