

## INSTITUTE RESOURCE PAPER #1: SCIENCE AND DOCTRINE

### WHAT IS SCIENCE AND WHAT IS DOCTRINE?

One of the major problems in the Marxist movement is the sectarianism that develops from a confusion of even the merging of science, which develops without interruption, and doctrine, which changes with every change in social development.

**Science:** A science is a branch of knowledge dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general law. In this respect, Marxism is the science of society and functions as any other science in its field.

**Doctrine:** A doctrine is a particular principle or policy. All doctrine – that is to say, all policy and principles – arise upon and utilize some assumption, fact, or scientific achievement.

Let us take military doctrine, which is the most important of all doctrine. At the beginning of WWI the French High Command assumed that the French spirit of élan – the spirit of attack – or the offensive would counter balance the larger more experienced and better equipped German Army. The entire French military doctrine of WWI and consequently the strategy was built on this assumption – and with disastrous consequences. The Japanese made this exact mistake in WWII.

**Marxism:** The Marxist doctrine must not be confused with Marxism as a science. Marxism as a science can best be summed up as this:

*In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations that correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of productions constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on*

*which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production – or what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relation of production never appear before the material condition of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.*

This statement is a magnificent expression of social science and is the basis for all Marxist writing.

So, how does doctrine arise from science? Let us take a military example. Prior to the invention of the breech-loading rifle, military doctrine called for close order mass assault upon one military force by another. Generally, one volley would be fired and the attacking force would complete the assault with bayonets and rifle butts. The scientific development of the rapid fire, breech-loading rifle and, later, the machine gun and rifled artillery forced military leader to drop the doctrine of close order mass assault in favor of open rank assault with the defending force protected by trenches. During WWI the development of motor vehicles and carbon steel presented the military with the tank which forced the abandonment of trench warfare in favor of foxholes.

For example, when scientists developed jellied gasoline, the military immediately understood its use in war. Napalm forced the creation of new military doctrine that took the destructive power of napalm into consideration. In other words, each advance

in science forces the practical workers to develop doctrine and policy compatible with those advances.

Now, what was the doctrine of Marxism and under what conditions was it developed? The process was the social revolution from agriculture to industry. The development of industry had created new classes and a new economy. The big and petty bourgeoisie as well as the working class were in revolutionary struggle with the feudal political structure. In his "Address to the Communist League," Marx spelled out the principal doctrine of the working class revolutionaries as:

The relation of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty-bourgeois democrats is this: it marches together with them against the faction which it aims at overthrowing, it opposes them in everything whereby they seek to consolidate their position in their own interest.

This tactic was in line with the doctrine of the time which was, "For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one."

Lenin could easily adopt not only Marxism as a science, but also then the current doctrine of Russia was going through the same historic transformation from agriculture to industry that western Europe went through a hundred years before. That doctrine had to change but little to be compatible to the specifics of the Russian revolution. Lenin writes:

*A social Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage a class struggle for socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. Hence, the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social Democracy. Hence, the temporary nature of our tactics of "striking a joint blow with the bourgeoisie" and the duty of keeping a strict watch "over our ally, as over an enemy."*

Once again science has created new means of production that is creating new classes and destroying the old. This time, the resulting political struggle is not between the feudal regime on the one hand and the workers and bourgeoisie on the other. This

time there are no middle classes and the classical doctrine of Marx has no meaning for us. The science of society is more important than ever before. The principle task of the Marxist today is to create a new doctrine and consequently new tactics for this new period of time.

Science developed new means of production: robotics or automation. Robotics is just as hostile to the political system based on electro-mechanics as the steam engine was to the political system based on agrarian production by combined human and animal labor.

The above quoted scientific statement by Marx is completely applicable, but the doctrine is not. There is no possibility of tactical unity with a section of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie of Marx's time no longer exists. Capitalism as Marx knew it no longer exists. The science remains, but we must evolve a new revolutionary doctrine for this period.