Confusion Between Communism and State Capitalism

M.P.T. Acharya

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In the article "IN REGARD TO COMMUNISM" and the correspondence between Com. S. A. Dange and Shri Vinoba Bhave, Shri Mashruwala and Bhave do not refer to real communism as such, but to other side-issues which have nothing to do with Communism, although referred to as such.[1] Neither Mashruwala nor Bhave nor Bharatan Kumarappa questions whether what the party calling itself Communist tries to force upon mankind is really real Communism. Even the Capitalists have taken for granted that what prevails in Russia is real Communism. It does not occur to them that it can be anything but Communism. They give the Bolsheviks the undeserved compliments of being Communists. They do not know that it is not Communism but Russian Bolshevism, which is a danger to the peace of the world. They quarrel about a word about the meaning and contents of which they have no idea at all.

Let me tell you—and any radical Marxian will confirm it—that what the Bolsheviks do in Russia and try to do elsewhere is just Capitalism of another type, and the quarrel between Capitalists and Bolsheviks is not about Communism but about the type of Capitalism which should prevail. Both have a common basis of thought, which is capitalistic. What the Capitalists are against is the Bolshevik attempt at doing away with divided private owners and setting up a state by their party as the sole owner. The mode of management is the same, namely, making the entire people wage-slaves, exactly as Capitalist owners do. The issue between them is not whether or not Capitalism should be totally abolished and Communism should be ushered in, but who should manage Capitalism. Both are opposed to Communism. Neither the Capitalists nor the Bolsheviks will argue about Communism. Yet Bolshevism is supposed to be Communism and the opposite of Capitalism! It is State Capitalism—Capitalism by the state,—owned and run by the Bolshevik party pretentiously calling itself Communist. All the three brands, Marxism, Leninism, or Stalinism are advocates of state ownership and state Capitalism, and they want it to be kept under the control of the Bolshevik party of Moscow throughout the world (Ask Tito, who claims also to be a Marxian and Leninist, about it).

Am I to understand Shris Bhave, Mashruwala, and Kumarappa have no quarrel about the Bolshevik Communism provided that the system is introduced peacefully and non-violently through the ballot-box and voluntary relinquishments—although it would be a new slavery instead of the old? Do they object only to the method of reaching the system of new slavery?

The Bolsheviks would have no objection to that method. But they think or know it cannot be brought about without force and fraud. Hence they do not believe in the ballot-box method or voluntary sacrifices. Hence they say: if you submit to our Capitalism voluntarily you are welcome; but if you do not do so willingly, we are not going to wait, you shall surrender, or be massacred. This is also the threat to workers, peasants, middle-classes, and employees, though it is addressed to them in a cunning and sugar-coated manner. As a matter of fact, they have also to submit to that slavery under their rule. If the Capitalists want to massacre these so-called Communists before they themselves are massacred,

[1] Acharya refers to Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala's article "In Regard to Communism," Harijan, 15:25 (August 18, 1951), and a correspondence between S. A. Dange and Vinoba Bhava in the same issue; Shripad Amrit Dange (1899–1991) was a founding member of the Communist Party of India (CPI); Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982) was an Indian advocate of non-violence, influenced by Gandhi and the Sarvodaya movement, with anarchist leanings; Mashruwala (1890–1952) was an associate of Gandhi and editor of Harijan.

the Communists have no right to complain, for they want to do the same thing against them if possible. It is a war between two rival claimants of capital, one being the defender of private Capitalism, the other, the fighter for state Capitalism.

There can be no political Communism like the one the Bolsheviks want to establish. Communism means undivided society. But what the Bolsheviks and Marxians of all varieties want is the rulership of their parties over all. They may practice some sort of communism among themselves but they are rulers and employers living upon wage-slaves in the same way as capitalists. In real Communism, there can be neither employers nor employed. The employer-employee system is an essential feature of Capitalism. Its abandonment it acceptable neither to the Capitalists nor the Bolsheviks. Of course, the Bolsheviks say that ultimately they want to abolish the state, their rulership and relations as employer and employee. Yes, after establishing and perpetuating the wage system! The Capitalists may also take a leaf from the Bolsheviks and say they also want to abolish employer-employee relations some time, in its own time, when the time is ripe, and when all agree to do so through the ballot-box! They may also allege that there is a transition stage between the two, which must be passed through. That transition stage is our rulership. Both can say this without the least abashment, and both would be equally good Communists.

Com. Dange may be a sincere man but he is a fanatic of the Bolshevik party which stands for the hegemony of Moscow. Sincerity can do nothing against the fanaticism of a wrong idea, the wrong idea will become sincerity. One cannot argue with fanatics.

When Com. Dange and lesser Socialists say that they want to help the peasants to own land, they are telling things which they don't want and which they won't allow if they sat in government; for, they do not want peasant proprietorship but want state-ownership of land, collective and state farms where peasants will become virtually landlaborers for the state. It is the pride of Soviet Russia, their fatherland, that 99 percent of the land is nationalized and there are no individual peasants. It is not Marxism to divide land among peasants. I have myself heard it from the mouth of Lenin. He meant "neither private ownership, nor common ownership" but state ownership. But Communism is common ownership and not private ownership or state ownership. Private ownership is what Capitalists want. The Communists encourage private ownership of land among peasants in order to use them for their fight and not for the benefit of peasants. They know very well that it is not Communism. In newly acquired territories like East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Balkans, the Bolsheviks no doubt first distributed the land among the peasants, but soon started collectivizing them under state ownership, and establishing collective and state farms where the former peasants become only wage slaves. That is what they will do here. Peasants will be deprived of their lands by the state peacefully or violently.

Com. Dange sheds crocodile tears over the miseries of peasants. But under the rule of his party, and even under his own military governorship on behalf of Stalin, all these things will not be done even after feudalism and landlordism are abolished. By simply abolishing feudalism and landlordism the peasant will not be emancipated. In Eastern Europe, after the peasants were given land, they found they could not cultivate their properties, for want of enough means to start cultivation. So the governments asked them to collectivize lands if they wanted help from the state. As they could not live otherwise, even exist, they had to accept the proposal and work as contract laborers for the state. In Russia, the collectives are rack-rented by the state with the help of the tractors, which are lent to the collectives on exorbitant conditions. It is also another, modern kind of feudalism. The tractors are not owned by any collectives but are the monopoly of the state. They want to introduce this Socialism in India, and call it Communism. The state bureaucracy, army, and police cannot be run even by Communists except at the expense of the producing workers and it is Communism of parasites which they want to bring to India. One must be ashamed to call that Communism.

Communism cannot be established until the peasants take over all the land and instruments and run the lands collectively for their own benefit without any state to interfere with, or "protect" them.

Communism is all right if it were Communism, but to admire anything with a label of Communism will neither solve the problem nor make it Communism. It will be paying tribute to a false thing going

under an ideal label. Communism cannot be established from the top by violence, not by cutting the Gordian knot, but only untying it diligently. Most likely we will have chaos rather than Bolshevism. Bolshevism alone will save Capitalism. May Com. Dange be happy!

Harijan (October 27, 1951), 298–299.

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