INTRODUCTION

Marxist epistemology is fundamentally opposed to others in social sciences. Although their differences may have originated in the ancient Greek schools of thought, these became stronger and sharper during the last two centuries or so. Until the mid-nineteenth century idealism and its other-worldly weltanschauung continued to hold sway over materialism, in spite of some brilliant works by the rationalist-materialist philosophers. However, it was during the later half of the nineteenth century that idealist school of thought was effectively challenged, above all, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Since then, dialectical materialist school of thought, or Marxism-Leninism as it is popularly known, has also acquired a place of prominence in social sciences.

The exponents of Marxist and other great epistemological traditions not only disagree on the essence of methodology but also there are some fundamental differences on their universe and their conceptions of society and the

1. The philosophers during the period of Enlightenment laid the foundation of rational-materialist school of thought. Originating in France the influence of rational school of thought soon spread to other Western European countries. After the French revolution, which proved still-born, the rationalist school of thought could not make much impact until Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emerged on the scene. See Irving K. Zeitlin, Ideology and Development of Sociological Theory, (New York, 1969).
nature of its institutions. The scientific validity of Marxist epistemology is questioned by others. For instance, it is not uncommon in the West to describe contemporary socialist/communist states as totalitarian regimes, mobilised political system, etc., and to view Marxism-Leninism, which gives ideological legitimacy to these states, as a political religion. On the other hand, Marxist scholars assert that concepts of other schools of thought on democracy, liberty, secular state, etc.; are unscientific, and that they do not conform to the actual socio-political processes obtaining in capitalist countries.

However, an investigation of the pros and cons of currently, and even relevant, epistemological methodologies is entirely beyond the scope of our study. We are concerned here only with the Marxist-Leninist framework. Suffice here to point out that we are not unaware of the 'other', perhaps equally valid, methodological approaches.

Hence it should be clarified at the very outset that in our study we propose to examine the process of secularisation of politics in the USSR with particular reference to a case study of Uzbekistan within a specific framework, as adopted

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2. See, for example, David Apter, "Political Religion in New Nations" in Clifford Geertz (Ed.), Old Societies and New States, (New York, 1965), pp. 57-104.

3. See, for example, G. Shahnazarov, Socialist Democracy, (Moscow, 1974), Chapter I.
in Soviet Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. The essential inputs of this specific framework appear to be relevant concepts and ideas of Marxism-Leninism, historical legacies of Central Asia and, above all, a deliberate and concentrated use of Soviet political power.

We now proceed with our investigation of this framework, beginning with an analysis of concepts and ideas that proved crucial in the evolution of Soviet policy towards secularisation of politics in Uzbekistan, while other inputs of this framework will be taken up later. In the following chapter, we propose to confine ourselves only to those concepts and ideas of Marxism-Leninism that are relevant to our study; it is not an analysis of the totality of Marxist-Leninist views on society as such.