

First Day

By submitting another article, a good two years after his last article, (that infamous text on linguistics^[1] which we had to deal with only incidentally, but which would be worthy of detailed treatment; nevertheless, quod differtur^[2]) about 50 pages long^[3], Stalin responds to topics that have been presented in the last two years not only in the series “Thread of Time,” but also in the workshops on the theory and programme of Marxism conducted by our Movement, and which have been published in summarized or detailed form.

By which we do not mean that Stalin (or his secretariat, whose networks span the globe) would have looked at this material and turned to us. We must not believe that if we are real Marxists, the great historical disputes required personified protagonists presenting themselves to the astounded humanity – as if an angel on his cloud were blowing into the heavenly trumpet, and Dante’s demon Barbariccia responds with a sound that comes “de profundis,” that is, from the depths, in the realest, known to you, sense of the word^[4]. Or like the Christian Paladin and the Saracen Sultan, who, before they draw their sparkling sabers, introduce themselves in a loud voice, challenge each other with the list of their ancestors and victorious tournaments and swear death to each other.

That’s just what was missing! On the one hand, the highest leader of the world’s largest state and the “communist” world proletariat, and on the other hand, a nobody, a nothing.

In reality, the facts and material forces acting in the substructure deterministically take up the discussion among themselves; and those who then dictate the text or hack into the keys are, like those who give the lecture, mere mechanisms, loudspeakers that passively convert the waves into voices; and it is not said that a loudspeaker with a power of 2000 watts doesn’t just produce the greatest nonsense.

It is therefore the same questions that emerge with regard to the importance of both social conditions in today’s Russia and international relations at the economic, political and military levels; they impose themselves just as much up there as they do down here, and they can only be clarified if they are juxtaposed with the theory that grasps what has already happened and is known, and if these questions are juxtaposed with the history of this theory, which a very long time ago – which remains indelible – was a common one.

So we know very well that Stalin’s answer from the upper Kremlin stories does not respond to our words and is not addressed to us. In order to continue the debate, it is not even necessary for him to know our theoretical organs^[5]. The things and forces – whether large or small, past, present or future – remain the same, despite the whims of symbolism. When the ancient philosophy wrote “sunt nomina rerum” (literally: the names belong to things), she wanted to say that things do not belong to the name. Translated into our language, this means: the thing determines the name, not the other way round. You can continue to dedicate 99% of your work to the name, portraits, epithets, lives and graves of the great men: we will continue in the shadows, knowing that soon the generation will come who will only smile at you, you famous men of the great and very small calibre.

But the things between the lines in Stalin’s writing are too important for us to deny him the dialogue. For this reason, and not from a “à tout seigneur tout honneur,” we answer and expect the new appeal – even if it takes another two years, because we don’t have a hurry (isn’t it true, ex-Marxist?).

Tomorrow and Yesterday

All of the issues dealt with by Stalin are junctions of Marxism and almost all of them are old nails, which we insistently demanded that they be struck firmly before we presume to forge the future.

Of course, the majority of the political “viewers” distributed among the various camps were not impressed by what Stalin had come back to in a suggestive way, but by what he anticipated about an uncertain future. Rushing onto it (because that’s what is causing a stir) neither friend nor foe understood a single word and presented strange and exaggerated versions. The perspective – that is their obsession. If the observers are a bunch of fools, the machinist is no better off: He, who starts the machine from his high prison, the highest offices of governmental power, is currently in a position in which he is least likely to be able to see and anticipate himself. So while all of the impressive predictions cause excitement, we are concerned with what came to him as a result of his retrospect (where he is not blocked by kippers and a lot of whirlwind). In accordance with the existentialist credo, everyone obeys the utterly dumb imperative: to talk, and the political press provides entertainment just when it reveals the future and reports about prophecies that a “great name” has lowered itself down to pronounce. This time something unexpected came about: nothing of world revolution, nothing of peace anymore, but also no “holy” war between Russia and the rest of the world, but rather the inevitable war between the capitalist states, which Russia – for the time being – is not counted among. No news for Marxism, but also interesting for us who do not have a particular fondness for political cinema, where the cinema-goer doesn’t care much whether what he sees is “really true” or not. And in the dream world of the land of boundless opportunities, luxurious restaurants, white telephones or the embrace of a flawless supervenus made of celluloid, the spectator, the small employee or the wage slave, returns

contentedly to his hovel, where he approaches his wife, who is embarrassed by the troubles of work, if he does not replace her with a street beauty.

Well, instead of focusing on the starting point – because that is essential – everyone has rushed to the end. One would have to put a stop to this whole flock of half-idiot, who crumbled their heads over the “after,” and repulse the study of the “before”; that would be a lot easier, but they can’t think of that. Although one does not understand the opened page, one does not resist the temptation to turn the page further, in the hope of becoming wise after all from the previous one; so it happens that the fool becomes more and more stupid.

In whatever shape the police commanding public peace, who the West is so disgusted at (where the means of dulling and standardizing the skulls are ten times bigger and more repugnant): The definition of the social stage reached and the running economic wheelwork in Russia is a question that imposes itself – leading to the following dilemma: Should we continue to claim that the Russian economy is socialist, respectively in the first stage of communism, or do we have to admit that despite state industrialism, it is governed by the law of value inherent to capitalism? Stalin seems to be attacking the last thesis and slowing down economists and plant managers who are in a hurry to accept it. In reality, he is preparing the confession^[6] that will soon follow and be useful in the revolutionary sense as well. But the bullshit organized by the “free world” reads from it the announcement of the transition to the higher stage of full communism!

In order to bring the question to the fore, Stalin makes use of the classical method. It would be easy to bet on a different color that would free him from any obligation to Marx and Lenin’s school, but even the bank itself could be blown up at this stage of the game. So instead we start from ovo. Well, that is all right for us, since we have not bet anything in history’s roulette and learned from childhood on: our cause is that of the proletariat, which has nothing to lose. Stalin explains that a “textbook of the Marxist economy” is necessary (we are in 1952), not only for the Soviet youth, but also for comrades in other countries. So watch out, inexperienced and forgetful!

To include a chapter on Lenin and Stalin as the founders of the political economy of socialism in such a book, even Stalin considers superfluous because it would not bring anything new. That’s right, if he wants to say what is already known: they both didn’t invent it, but learned it – Lenin always emphasized this.

Now that we are moving on to the field of strict terminology and “school” wording, we must say in advance that we have a preprint of Stalin’s text, which the Stalinist newspapers themselves have taken from a non-Russian press agency. We will look up in the full text as soon as possible^[7].

Commodities and Socialism

The reference to the basic elements of Marxist economics serves Stalin to discuss the “system of commodity production in socialism.” We have explained in various texts (avoiding to say anything new) that every system of commodity production is a non-socialist system; this is exactly what we will reaffirm. If Stalin (Stalin, again and again Stalin; we are dealing here with an article that could just as well have come from a commission that could “in 100 years” have replaced or discredited Stalin: for simplicity’s sake, however, it is useful to use names as symbols for complex events and contexts) had spoken of a system of commodity production after the conquest of power by the proletariat, this would not have been a monstrosity.

Referring to Engels, it seems that some “comrades” in Russia have said that the maintenance of the system of commodity production (respectively the commodity character of the products) after nationalization of the means of production meant to maintain the capitalist economic system. Stalin is certainly not the man who could theoretically prove them wrong. If, however, they say that, in case they say it, one had been able to eliminate commodity production and had only neglected or forgotten it, then they should be mistaken.

But Stalin wants to prove that in a “socialist country” (a word belonging to a questionable school) commodity production can exist, and he draws upon the Marxist definitions and their clear, albeit perhaps not entirely flawless, synthesis in Lenin’s propaganda brochure^[8].

We have dealt several times with this subject, i. e. commodity production, its emergence and rule, its clearly capitalist character.^[9] According to Josef Stalin, precise plans can be drawn up within commodity production without fearing that the terrible maelstrom of the commodity world will draw the careless pilot into the middle of the vortex and devour him in the capitalist abyss. However, his article reveals (to whom reading it as a Marxist) that the vortexes are becoming ever tighter and faster – as predicted in theory.

The commodity, as Lenin reminds, is a thing with a double character: it satisfies some human need and is exchangeable for another thing. And the lines just before say simply: “In capitalist society, the production of commodities is predominant, and Marx’s analysis therefore begin with an analysis of commodity.”

The commodity thus possesses these two characteristics, and it does only become a commodity when the second characteristic is added to the first. The first, use value, is comprehensible even for flat materialists like us, even for a child. It can be sensually experienced: once licked on a piece of sugar, we stretch out our hands once more for a sugar cube. But the road is long – Marx flies over it in this great paragraph – until the sugar takes on an exchange value and one comes to the delicate problem of Stalin, who is surprised that one established an equivalence between grain and cotton.

Marx, Lenin, Stalin and we know very well what a hell dance is going on as soon as exchange value appears. What did Lenin say? Where the bourgeois economists saw relationships between things, Marx discovered relationships between people! What do the three volumes of Marx's "Capital" and the nearly 50 pages of Lenin's work prove? Very simple. Where conventional economics sees perfect equivalence in exchange, we no longer see exchangeable things, but people in a social movement, we no longer see equivalence, but a scam. Karl Marx speaks of a spook that gives the goods this strange and at first glance incomprehensible character. Lenin, like any other Marxist, would have grabbed the cold horror at the idea of being able to produce and exchange goods while at the same time expelling their inherent devil through exorcism. Does Stalin believe that? Or does he just want to tell us that the devil is stronger than himself?

Just as the ghosts of medieval knights took revenge on Cromwell's revolution by bourgeoisly haunting the castles left to the Landlords, so the goblin fetish of the commodity runs inexorably through the halls of the Kremlin, and behind the rush of words sounding from the speakers of the nineteenth party convention, one can hear gloating laughter^[10].

When he wants to establish that commodity production and capitalism are not absolutely identical, Stalin again makes use of our method. Following the historical course backwards, he points out, like Marx, that in certain forms of society (slavekeeper order, feudalism, etc.) commodity production existed but "did not lead to capitalism." This is indeed what Marx says in a passage of his historical summary, but he has developed it quite differently and with a completely different aim. The bourgeois economist claims that the system of commodity production is the only possible mechanism to combine production with consumption – he knows all too well that as long as this mechanism is in place, capital will continue to dominate the world. Marx replies: We will see where the historical trend is heading; first of all, I force you to acknowledge the irrefutable facts of the past: it wasn't always commodity production that ensured that the consumer was supplied with the product of labour. As examples, he mentions the primitive societies based on collecting and direct consumption, the ancient forms of the family and the tribe, the feudal system of direct consumption within self-sufficient circles, in which the products did not have to take on a commodity form. With the development and complexity of technology and needs, sectors emerge that are first supplied by barter trade and then by actual trade. Which proves that commodity production, including private property, is neither "natural" nor, as the bourgeois claims, permanent and eternal. The late appearance of commodity production (the system of commodity production, as Stalin says) and its existence on the sidelines of other modes of production serve Marx to show that commodity production, after it has become universal, just after the spread of the capitalist production system, must go down with it.

It would take too long if we wanted to cite the Marxist passages directed against Proudhon, Lassalle, Rodbertus and many others, denouncing any attempt to reconcile commodity production with the socialist emancipation of the proletariat.

For Lenin, this is the cornerstone of Marxism. It would be quite difficult to reconcile it with Stalin's current thesis: "Why then, one asks, cannot commodity production similarly serve our socialist society for a certain period" or "Commodity production leads to capitalism only if there is private ownership of the means of production, if labour power appears in the market as a commodity which can be bought by the capitalist and exploited in the process of production, and if, consequently, the system of exploitation of wagedworkers by capitalists exists in the country." This hypothesis is, of course, absurd; in the Marxist analysis, any existence of a mass of commodities suggests that reserveless proletarians had to sell their labour-power. If in the past there was commodity production limited to a few branches, it was not because the labour-power was sold "voluntarily" as it is today, but rather because it was squeezed by force of arms from enslaved prisoners or serfs in personal dependency.

Do we have to quote the first two lines of "Capital" again? "The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities'."

The Russian Economy

After the text has more or less skillfully demonstrated to show respect for the origins of Marxism, it moves on to the question of today's Russian economy. The task is to silence those who want to have determined that the system of commodity production inevitably leads to the restoration of capitalism – and thus also us, who even more clearly say: commodity production only survives in so far as we are within a totally capitalist system.

In the famous Stalin pamphlet one finds these concessions regarding the Russian economy: even if the large firms are socialized, the small and medium-sized firms however aren't expropriated: on the contrary, this would "be equal to a crime." According to the author, they should transition into cooperative firms.

Currently there are two sectors of commodity production in Russia: on the one hand the public, “nationally owned” production. In the state-owned enterprises, the means of production and production itself, thus also the products, are national property. How simplistic: in Italy, the tobacco factories and accordingly their sold cigarettes are owned by the state. Does this already qualify for the assertion that one is in a phase of the “abolishment of the wage labour system” and the respective workers weren’t “forced” to sell their labour power? Surely not.

Let’s move on to the other sector: agriculture. In the kolkhozes, says the brochure, land and machines are state property, but the products of labour don’t belong to the state, but to the kolkhoz. And the kolkhoz sheds only from them because they are commodities, which are exchangeable for other commodities that one needs. There is no link between the rural kolkhoz and the urban regions which is not based on exchange. “Therefore commodity production and commodity circulation are still such a necessity as they have been thirty years ago for example.”

Let’s put aside for a moment the argument about the remote possibility of overcoming this situation. It is to be noted that what Lenin proposed in 1922 is out of the question: “We wield the political power in our hands, and we will persevere militarily, but in the economic domain we need to fall back on the purely capitalist form of commodity production.” Corollary of this statement was: if we interrupt for a certain time the erection of the socialist economy, we will get back at it after the European revolution. Today’s propositions are diametrically opposed to this.

One doesn’t even try anymore to make a case such as the following: in the transition from capitalism to socialism certain sectors of production for a while are still subjected to commodity production.

Instead, one simply says: everything is a commodity; there is no other economic framework but that of commodity exchange and accordingly of the buying of labour power, not even in state-owned, large firms. Indeed, from where does the factory worker get his means of subsistence? The kolkhoz sells them to him mediated by private merchants; preferably it sells them to the state, from which it obtains tools, fertilizer etc.; the worker then must procure the means of subsistence in the state-owned stores for hard-earned rubles. Couldn’t the state distribute the products, of which it can dispose, directly to its workers? Surely not, because the worker (especially the Russian one) doesn’t consume tractors, vehicles, locomotives, not to speak of cannons and machine guns. And clothing and furniture are of course produced in the small- and medium-sized firms untouched by the state.

The state therefore can give the workers which are dependent upon it nothing but a monetary wage, with which they then buy what they want (a bourgeois euphemism for: the little they can buy). That the wage-distributing entrepreneur is the state, which presents itself as the “ideal” or “legitimate” representative of the working class, doesn’t say the slightest, if it wasn’t even able to begin distributing anything quantitatively relevant outside the mechanism of commodity production.

Anarchy and Despotism

Stalin approaches some Marxist goals, which we continuously brought back from the past: lowering of the gap, respectively sublation of the contradiction between town and country; overcoming of the social division of labour; drastic reduction (to 5 or 6 hours as an immediate measure) of the working day, as the only mean to abolish the separation between manual and mental labour and to erase the leftovers of bourgeois ideology.

At the assembly in July 1952 in Rome, we dealt with the topic of the 12. chapter of “Capital”: “Separation of labour and factory,” for “factory” read “business.” It was shown: to leave capitalism, along with the system of commodity production, the social division of labour – of which Stalin also speaks – and as well the technical, respectively managerial division of labour, which leads to the brutalization of the worker and which is the origin of factory despotism, must be destroyed. The two axes of the bourgeois system are social anarchy and factory despotism. In Stalin, we can at least recognize the struggle to fight against the former, whereas he remains silent about the latter. But nothing in contemporary Russia is moving towards the direction of the programmatical goals, neither those named by Stalin, nor those of which nobody talks anyway.

If a – today as tomorrow insurmountable – barrier is lowered down between state firm and kolkhoz, which only lifts to allow for business “for mutual gain” to be made, what should bring town and country closer together, what should free the worker from the necessity to sell too many working hours for little money, respectively a few means of subsistence and give him therefore the possibility of disputing the scientific and cultural monopoly of capitalist tradition?

We therefore not only haven’t got the first phase of socialism in front of us, but also not even a total state capitalism, that means an economy, in which – even though all products are commodities and circulate for money – the state disposes of every product; so, a form in which the state can centrally determine all proportions of equivalence, including labour power. Such a state as well couldn’t be controlled nor conquered economically/politically by the working class and would function in service of the anonymous and hidden operating capital. But Russia is far away from that anyways: all that is there, is the after the anti-feudal revolution arisen state industrialism^[11]. Thanks to public investment in extensive public projects, this system allowed for the quick development and dispersion of industry and of capitalism, accelerated the bourgeois transformation of agriculture and agricultural law. But the “collectivist economic” agricultural businesses have nothing public, much less socialist in them: they’re on the level of

cooperatives, just as they existed around the turn of the century in the Italian Padan Plain and which produced on leased or (often out of state ownership) bought land. The only difference is that in the kolkhoz without a doubt there's a hundred times more thefts than in those modest, but honest cooperatives – but Stalin, high up in the Kremlin, is not going to hear of that.

The industrial state must negotiate the buying of the means of consumption on the “free market,” which means that wage and labour time are on the same level as in the capitalist private industry. Concerning the economic development, it is to be said that for example America is closer to complete state capitalism than Russia: after all the Russian worker has to spend three fifths of his wage on agrarian products, whereas the American worker spends the same ratio on industrial products; he even gets the food delivered by the industry for the most part in cans – the poor devil.

State and Retreat

At this point, there is another important question to be posed. The relationship between agriculture and industry stays on an entirely bourgeois level, no matter how substantial the inexorable progress of industry. Stalin confesses, that not even future interventions into this relation are to be expected, which would amount to more statism, much less socialism.

This drawback also hides subtly behind the Marxist doctrine. What can we do? Expropriate the kolkhozes brutally? For that we would need to make use of the state power. And precisely here Stalin reintroduces the withering away of the state, which he wanted to do away with on another occasion, whereas he back then put a mask on, as if he wanted to say: “You're only making fun, right guys?.”

Of course, the assumption, that a worker's state could make a drawback is indefensible – when the entire agrarian sector is still commodity based and privately organized. Because even if one would for a moment accept the earlier contested thesis of the existence of commodity production under socialism, it would be inseparable from the other thesis: If commodity production isn't abolished everywhere, the withering away of the state cannot be on the table.

Ultimately, we can only reason that the fundamental relation between town and country (that during the dramatic development of thousands of years freed itself from Asiatic and feudal forms) is solved there exactly as capitalism plans and what is expressed by the classical, in bourgeois countries used words: To regulate the commodity exchange between industry- and agricultural production rationally. This system “requires thus a gigantic increase” of industrial production [Stalin, p. 95]. Well then! If one disregards for a moment the fantasized correct state – a virtually “liberal” solution.

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The question of the relation between agriculture and industry was answered by the confession of the impotence to do anything but to industrialize and to increase production, thus at the expense of the workers. At this point, as already mentioned, there are the other two great questions of the relation between state and business and among businesses to be posed.

For Stalin, it presented itself like this: Does the law of value which applies in capitalist production also exist in Russia? Does it also apply for the state owned, large scale industry? This law determines, that commodity exchange always follows equivalents: the appearance of “freedom, equality and Bentham”^[12], which Marx destroyed, when he showed that capitalism doesn't produce for the product, but for profit. Command and control of the economic laws – between those two cliffs Stalin's “manifesto” maneuvers back and forth and thus confirms our thesis: In its most powerful form, capital subordinates itself to the state, even when the state appears as the judicial sole owner of all businesses.

On the second day, oh Scheherazade^[13], we will tell you of that, and on the third day of the world market and war.

Second Day

To precisely define the economy of contemporary Russia, we on the first day of this dispute with Stalin's “answers” to our Marxist inquiries and demonstrations mainly concerned ourselves emphasizing the incommensurateness of commodity production and socialist economy. For us, every system of commodity production in the modern world, a world of associated labour, that is the aggregation of workers in production plants, is defined as capitalist economy.

Let's now get to the question of the stages of socialist economy (better: of socialist organization) and the distinction between lower and higher stage of communism. To get away from the definition of “immovable” and thus abstract systems and to put ourselves on the ground of history, let's anticipate the central assertion of our doctrine: The transition from capitalist to socialist economy doesn't happen in an instant, but in a long process. We must thus assume, that for a relatively long period there might be a coexistence of private and collective sectors, of capitalist (and precapitalist) and socialist realms. But we specify already that every realm, every sector, in which commodities (including human labour power) circulate, are bought and sold, is capitalist economy.

In the now distributed and in the meantime for us available scripture, Stalin explains, that in the Russian agricultural sector commodity production, respectively market economy exists (he further confirms the existence of private economy, insofar as some means of production are in private ownership as well), and he asserts that the industrial sector (large scale industry) only produces commodities when goods for consumption, but not when goods for production are produced. Nevertheless he acts convinced, to not only be able to call the sector of large scale industry, but the entire Russian economy socialist, even though commodity production continues to prevail on a big basis.

We addressed all this already in our texts, which dealt with the basic documents of Marxism and the data of general economic history; today we must move over to the question of the “economic laws,” particularly “the law of value.”

Certainties and uncertainties

Let’s first remark: To meet the objections of Russian economists, that invoke Engels to clarify that one can only leave capitalism if one leaves commodity production, that capitalism is only overcome where commodity production is overcome, Stalin only tries to read something different out of a single paragraph in “Anti-Dühring” than what is written there, whereas in the entire section “Socialism: Theoretical – Production – Distribution” Engels develops the addressed thesis – and very well-tailored for the Stalinist Dühring as well.

The paragraph reads: “With the seizing of the means of production by society production of commodities is done away with, and, simultaneously, the mastery of the product over the producer..”

Engels, remarks Stalin, didn’t specify whether this concerns “all” or only “a part” of the means of production. The distinction might, or might not, seem very smart to one, from a theoretical point of view however, it is wrong. Only, so Stalin further, the social seizing of “all” means of production (Small and large scale industry, agriculture) allows to “get rid” of the system of commodity production. Caramba!

In 1919 we bestirred ourselves together with Lenin (and Stalin) until exhaustion, to force down the stubborn social democrats’ and anarchists’ throats, that the means of production cannot be conquered on a single day and by coup, and that precisely because of this – and only because of this – the terror, the dictatorship, is necessary. And today, new textbooks on political economy shall be published, that the absurdity, that all products lose their character as commodities on the day on which a functionary ascended to the Kremlin presents some Stalin with a decree for signature, which expropriates the last chicken of the last member of the last kolkhoz, is accepted.

In another paragraph, Engels talks about the seizing of all means of production, which is why we now need to hear that the above cited “formula of Engels cannot be described as entirely clear and exact” [Stalin, p. 11].

By the beard of the prophet Abraham, that’s strong stuff! Friedrich Engels, of all people, the contemplative, calm, sharply defining, crystal clear Friedrich, master of the patience to get a holed ship going again and to straighten the historical doctrine; whose modesty and prowess are unreachable (behind the impetuous Marx, who occasionally might seem difficult to understand because of his far sight and excellent language, and because of this strength maybe – maybe – might be easier to distort); Engels, whose language is so fluid, and who by talent and because of scientific discipline doesn’t omit a necessary word, nor adds an unnecessary one: of all people, one accuses him of a lack of precision and clarity!

One must put things into their place: We are not in the organizational office or in the agitation committee here, where you, ex-comrade Josef, might be able to persuade yourself to be able to have something on Engels. We are in the school of principles here. Where is the talk of the seizure of all means of production? Maybe there, where the talk is of commodities? Never. “Since the historical appearance of the capitalist mode of production, the appropriation by society of all the means of production has often been dreamed of, more or less vaguely, by individuals, as well as by sects, as the ideal of the future.,” reminds us Engels. Precisely because for us it is not a thing of an ideal, but of science, we cannot let a “more or less” clear, respectively unclear, pass.

And when Engels, a few pages on, talks about society as mistress of all means of production, then precisely in the passage, where he deals with the entirety of demands: because only through this upheaval will the emancipation of all individuals be achieved. Engels then shows, that the sublation of the divide between town and country, manual and mental labour, the social and professional division of labour was already demanded by the utopians, particularly the keen Fourier and Owen (Stalin indeed admits the first two divides, but claims, again theoretically being gravely in the wrong: “This problem wasn’t dealt with by the classics of Marxism” [Stalin, p.28]): In both, population should disperse across the country in groups of 1600 to 300, and mental and manual labour are in constant shift. Engels charges those justified and exalted demands only with one deficiency: the missing evidence (that only Marxism provided) of their realization given the basis of the then achieved and now excessive development of the productive forces. Anticipating the highest revolutionary victory, Engels describes an “organization of production,” in which regarding productive labour “burden becomes passion” and reminds us of the closed reasoning in the 12. Chapter of the first volume of “Capital” about the destruction of the social division of labour and the human crippling factory despotism. Neither Stalin nor Malenkov^[14] can boast to have made a step in that direction. On the contrary: Stachanovism and sturmovchina^[15] (dialectical

reactions of poor, crippled victims to the despotism in the haloed “sweatshops”) are the proof, that one is marching into the direction of the all stifling capitalism.

Stalin is trivializing those postulates, by reducing them to the “disappearance of the contradiction of interest” between industry and agriculture, between physically working people and the “leading personnel.” But something completely else is the point: The abolition of a social organization, in which the allocation of people onto these sectors and functions adheres to a strict division of labour.

Where have these passages of Engels ever allowed to say, that it wouldn’t be necessary for the entire vast building of the future society, to destroy with every turn of the shovel the production of commodities, to shovel up post by post of its reeking trenches?

We of course here cannot recite for Stalin all the chapters, but as usual we cite the essential, because clear and unequivocal paragraphs, which we accept without restrictions and not say *cum grano salis* [with a grain of salt]. We know by old experience, how such grains of salt have turned into mountains.

Engels: “The ‘exchange of labour for labour on the principle of equal valuation’, in so far as it has any meaning, that is to say, the mutual exchangeability of products of equal social labour, hence the law of value, is the fundamental law of precisely commodity production, hence also of its highest form, capitalist production..” It follows the famous passage in which Dühring is reproached for, just as Proudhon, imagining the future society as a market economy and not seeing, how he is thus describing a capitalist economy. An “imaginary society,” Engels says. At least Stalin in his not to be despised scripture describes an actually existing capitalist economy.

Marx: “Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour power of the community..” This sentence alone is a revolutionary programme. With the future achievement of this form of social organization, succinctly labelled as communism, one returns to the Robinson with which one started. What does that mean? Robinson’s product was no commodity, but an object of use, because there was – of course – no exchange. With eagle wings we fly over the entire history of humanity: “All the characteristics of Robinson’s labour are here [“here” means: in the communist association] repeated, but with this difference, that they are social, instead of individual..” The only necessary textbook to learn to read is the primer! And one reads: The product of labour ceases to be a commodity, when society is socialist. Then Marx arrives at the juxtaposition of this “state of things” (of socialism) with commodity production, and shows, that one is the dialectical, utter, relentless and irreconcilable opposite of the other.

Society and homeland

Before we however get to the question of economic laws, we must remark a great deal to the Stalinist version of the socialist programme put forward by Engels in the “Anti-Dühring.” This is even more important, as Stalin (in refutation of various Russian economists) refrains here from distortions and revisions of the classical texts and cites whole passages, while he in this subject utters a vehement “party condemnation” against any violation of orthodoxy.

Again and again Engels talks in his fundamental work about the seizure of the means of production by society, and first and foremost (we underline that a hundred times) about the seizure of the products – products, which today rule over the producer and even the consumer, so that from our point of view, capitalism can be described as a system, which not only negates the producers’ disposal of the means of production, but rather the disposal of the products.

In the Muscovite paraphrase the “society” disappears, instead the talk is about the transfer of the means of production to the state, the nation and (when in the terminal element of the events the point is to inflame passions and invoke the ritual ovations) to the people, the socialist homeland!

If one gives the summary of the Stalinist narrative, not without denying it the merit of brutal honesty, the seizure of the means of production regarding land and the large equipment goods of agriculture proves to be a mere legal question, because any of its practical consequences is already contained within the statutes of Artel^[16] or the last Soviet constitution (which shall be revised). One must see, that those solemn statements about the rightful property have nothing to do with the economic disposal of agrarian products, which are divided between the kolkhozes and the single kolkhozniki. Factually true is the seizure through the state only in the large-scale industry, because the state only here disposes of products, and those it sells, as far as they are products of consumption, again. In the small and medium sized businesses and in the commercial enterprises however, there is no seizure of products, not even of the means of production, by the state. This also applies to the micro-equipment of the state-sponsored family and parcel economy. Despite the existence of huge factories and giant public construction projects, the self-proclaimed socialist and Soviet republic leads and controls not a lot; and not much was truly socialized and nationalized. The meaning of state property in relation to the entire economy is probably bigger in some bourgeois states.

Who then, which institution, which power, wields what was wrested from the private hand after the revolution? The people, the nation, the homeland? Never have Engels and Marx used those words. The transformation of private property into state property, “does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces,” Engels remarks.

Only when society disposes of the products, only then it is clear, that it has overcome the class antagonisms and has become a classless society. But as long as there are classes, society will be organized by that “class solely,” which must sublate all classes, and as a dialectical consequence itself. Here, it is tied on the masterful illustration of the theory of the state, which emerged already in 1847: “The proletariat seizes the state power and initially turns the means of production into state property.” (Engels is citing Marx here). “But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinction and class antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state..” Only then, and only on this royal road it is society, which arises as the acting factor and finally disposes of the productive forces, all products, as well as resources.

But the people, what the heck is that? A mishmash of different classes, an “integral” of expropriators and slaves, of political or business professionals and the starving, respectively the oppressed. The “people” we already left to the associations for freedom and democracy, freedom and progress, before 1848. With its notorious “majorities,” the people is not the subject of economic planning, but merely an object of expropriation and fraud.

And the nation? As a necessity and perquisite for the emergence of capitalism it expresses the same mixture of social classes, not like “people” in the stale, legal and philosophic sense, but on a geographical, ethnographical and linguistic level. The “nation” as well doesn’t seize anything: In famous passages Marx ridiculed the expressions “national wealth” and “national income” (which plays an important role in Stalin’s analysis of Russia) and showed, that the nation enriches itself precisely when the worker is screwed.

If the bourgeois revolutions and the assertion of modern industry, which extruded feudalism in Europe and various other systems in the rest of the world, didn’t carry out in the name of the bourgeoisie and capital, but precisely in the name of the people and nations, if this was in the Marxist conception a revolutionary and necessary transition, then we can deduce, how consistently the Muscovite coincide with that: the jettison of Marxist political economy and the renunciation of the proletariat, revolutionary and internationalist “category” society (a category that is used in classic texts), as well as an orientation towards the political categories immanent in bourgeois ideology and propaganda: people’s democracy and national independence.

One does not need to be surprised then, when 26 years later the outrageous slogan is repeated, which we Marxists burned all bridges with: to “pick up”^[17] the banner of the bourgeoisie. The banner, which in the days of a Cromwell, Washington, Robespierre or Garibaldi was upheld and then thrown overboard; the revolution in its march however, will leave it in the mud – because their lies and myths of peoples, nations and homelands it counterposes with the socialist society.

Law and theory

In the Muscovite debate, the comparison between the laws of the Russian economy and the established laws of bourgeois economy by Marxism also came up. The namely text fights dialectically on two fronts. Some say: “If our economy was already socialist, we would not need to follow deterministically the tracks of certain economic processes, but could set the course differently: e.g. by the nationalization of the kolkhozes, the abolition of commodity exchange and monetary economy. If you show us, that this is impossible, then let’s deduce from that, that we live in a society, whose economy is entirely capitalist. What does it help to fool ourselves?” In contrast to that, others want to shelve criteria that distinguish socialism in Marxism; Stalin bestirs to answer both. Those naïve researchers are of course no active “political” elements: otherwise it would have been easy to take them out by a purge. We are only dealing with “technicians” and experts of the apparatus of production, through whose mediation the central government learns, whether the huge machinery runs smoothly or has stalled; and when they were right, it would not help to silence them: the crisis would show either way. The difficulties, which are surfacing today, or put more accurately, come to light, are not of academic, critical or even “parliamentary” nature – to move beyond such stitches, no “great man” needs to come, a small political parvenu could handle that. The difficulties on the other hand are real, material, they lie within the things, not in the heads.

For answering of the objections, the central government has to insist on two things: first, that in a socialist society, people also have to obey to economic laws which cannot be suspended. Second, that those laws – in whatever way they will differ in the future full communism all and sundry from the laws of capitalism – in the socialist phase partly correspond to the laws of capitalist production and distribution, partly differ from them. And if the apparently insurmountable laws are settled then, one must not ignore them by the punishment of demise and one particularly must not contravene them. So far Stalin.

Then a special, albeit essential question arises: is the law of value part of those laws which continue to persist in the Russian economy? And if yes, isn’t every mechanism that adheres to the law of value pure capitalism? Stalin replies to the first question: Yes, the law of value is in effect over here, though not everywhere. And to the second: No, not every economy in which the law of value operates is capitalist.

In the entire, solemnly presented theoretical “essay,” the structure seems to be very fragmented and most notably it suits the book of the enemies of Marxism. Those, who employ “philosophical” weapons, will have an easy job, because the effects of the laws of

nature and the effects of the economic laws on the human species are equated; while those, who prefer the weapon of “economy” and who have been waiting for a century for a revanche against Marx, can believe to have made it: “The laws of economic profitability and competition of social interests, like we understand them, you will never be able to evade.”

One has to distinguish between theory, law and programme. In a certain passage the following sentence slips out of Stalin’s mouth: “Marx, he, as we know, did not like [!] to digress from his investigation of the laws of capitalist production” [Stalin, p. 82].

We already showed at the last assembly in September 1952 in Milan, that Marx’s aim didn’t lie in the sterile description of the capitalist “status quo,” but that from every row the demand and the programme of the destruction of capitalism stares one in the face. Our point wasn’t only to destroy the old and stale opportunist legend, but to show the entire polemical and militant nature intrinsic to Marx’s work. That’s why Marx doesn’t lose himself within the description of capitalism, or respective capitalisms, but instead he describes a capitalist system, an abstract, yes, non-existent, yes, typical capitalism, which nevertheless entirely corresponds to the glorifying theses of the bourgeois economists. Important is solely the clash of both positions (a clash of classes and parties, not a mundane dispute between intellectuals), of which one wants to prove the permanence, the eternity of capitalist machinery, while the other proves its coming death. In this light the revolutionary Marx cared to admit, that the clockwork, perfectly centred and by the freedom of competition, and the right of every individual, to produce and consume by the same rules, is well lubricated. In the actual history of capital it has never been like that, it is not like that, it never will be like that, meaning: the concrete reality would for our reasoning be much more convenient. Even better. If it, to make it short, would have worked out for capitalism, to persevere another century with idyllic ease, the Marxian reasoning would have suffered shipwreck. But it continues to shine with full force, as capitalism continues, but only by monopolization, suppression, dictatorship and massacre; and its economic development precisely follows the results of the analysis of the pure type: confirmation of our doctrine, refutation of the lackeys of capital.

In this sense, Marx has dedicated his whole life to the description of socialism, of communism; had it concerned only the description of capitalism, he wouldn’t have given a damn about it.

Marx investigated and developed the “economic laws” of capitalism indeed, but the method, in which he did this, indicates the system of socialist characteristics entirely and in dialectical contradiction to them. So, does socialism adhere to those laws? Are they others? And if yes, which?

Just a moment! In the center of the Marxist work we put the programme, as a moment that follows a sober examination. “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it,” “Theses on Feuerbach,” and every educated dork adds: “youth” theses. But before the programme, and even before the depiction of the discovered laws, the doctrine as a whole, the system of “theories,” has to be determined.

Some of those theories Marx has found ready-made at his adversaries, e.g. Ricardo’s value theory, and the theory of surplus value as well. Those theories (we don’t want to claim Stalin never knew of them) are something different from the by Marx thoroughly treated “law of value,” respectively “law of surplus value,” which we here, to not confuse the less experienced among us, rather would like to call “law of the exchange of equivalents” and “law of the relation between the rate of surplus value and the rate of profit.”

It is important, to initially clarify the distinction between theory and law, a distinction, which also applies in science. Theory is the depiction of real processes and their relations, to ease the general understanding on a certain area – prediction and modification of those procedures only follow that. Law is the precise expression of a certain relation between multiple, particularly between two series of material circumstances: a relation, whose validity is verifiable at any point and which allows to calculate unknown proportions (no matter, you philosophers, if it is about future, part or present ones. For example I am, with a well discovered law, able to determine, how high the sea level was a thousand years ago; the only difference, that I cannot test, is, how much more you stink to high heaven today.). Theory is something universal, the law something strictly differentiated and particular. Theory is generally qualitative and serves the definition of certain magnitudes and essences. The law is quantitative and aims at their measurement.

An example from physics: in the history of optics, two theories of light have superseded each other with varying success. According to the particle theory, the transmission of light consists of the movement of miniscule “corpuscles,” while the wave theory explains this by the oscillation of a permanent medium. Now the easiest law of optics, the law of reflection, says that the ray that hits a mirror forms an angle of incidence that is equal to the angle of reflection. A thousand times this law is confirmed: the skirt chaser precisely knows where he must stand, when he wants to observe the beautiful neighbour that is grooming herself in front of the mirror: in fact, the law is compatible with both theories. It were different appearances and laws that decided the choice.

Now, according to Stalin’s text, the “law of the exchange of equivalents” is said to be compatible both with his “theory”: “In socialist economy there are forms of commodity production,” as well as with our theory that says: “If commodity production and mass production exist, then that’s capitalism.” The law is easily tested: One drives to Russia and one will see, that the exchange happens at determined prices with rubles, like on any arbitrary market: thus, the law of the exchange between equivalents prevails. To see now, which theory is the correct one, it’s a bit more difficult. We, for our part, deduce: In Russia one finds oneself within the

pure and real capitalism. As for Stalin, he fabricates a theory – precisely: theories are invented, laws discovered – and in defiance of father Marx says: certain economic appearances of socialism obey usually to the law of exchange (law of value).

Nature and history

Before we get to the point – which laws of capitalism Marx puts forward, which distinguish capitalism from socialism, respectively which are (perhaps) common to both -, we must point at the common equation of laws of nature with laws of society.

As students of Marx we must be militants and polemics; we must not solve such a question scholastically and insists on the theoretical analogy of both areas, perhaps with the “political” goal, to dodge the following argument: “Now, if the laws of society aren’t as insurmountable as for example the law of gravity, then let’s go: let’s knock some over.”

How could we forget, that the fight between the giant Marx and the paid gang in the universities of capital flared up on the point, that the laws of bourgeois economy are “no laws of nature,” and we therefore not only want to bust this circle of hell, but can bust it. It is true, that Stalin’s scripture reminds, that with Marx the laws of economy aren’t “eternal,” but instead correspond to certain social phases and epochs: slavery, feudalism, capitalism. But Stalin wants to point out that “certain laws” are common to all epochs and thus also assert themselves in socialism, which allegedly has an own “political economy.” Stalin ridicules Yaroshenko and Bukharin, that said, that political economy is succeeded by a “technique of social organisation” [Stalin, p.65]. Harshly he replies to that, that this new discipline, which pseudo-Marxist and trembling before the Tsarist police economists^[18] would have attended to, is in reality an “economic policy” – and as such he allows it [Stalin, p.74].

Well, whether there will be an economic science in socialism, we will discuss once things have been put in their correct place again^[19]; but where there is still an economic policy (like it is under the dictatorship of the proletariat), there are rivalling classes, and we are not yet in socialism. And we must ask like Lenin: Who has the power? And accordingly: Which direction does the economic development take, which – there we concur – takes place in stages? That will the laws of this development tell us.

As to the general question of laws in nature and history, it will be dealt with in our theoretical investigations there, where we reply to the expected attacks, which Marxism – which indeed has for 999 of 1000 writers established fixed abode in Moscow – will be subjected to: Attacks regarding Stalin’s banalization of the theory of historical materialism (that’s a theory, not a law) and regarding the questions of determinism and will, causality and ambition. The original content of the Marxian position (barely understood and very inconvenient for people, that pursue a policy of opportunist success) is always that of the direct class struggle and the historical antagonism between the classes, a struggle, which alternately resorts to the typewriter and the machine gun – provided one isn’t able to talk of “feather and sword” anymore. We conceded to the bourgeoisie the achievement, in its war against the old classes, to have promoted the critical-scientific method and to have boldly applied it to the area of nature and then to that of society. It discovered and proclaimed theories, which today are ours: value theory (the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labour time required for its production) and the surplus value theory (the value of every commodity contains advanced capital and surplus value, therefore a refund and profit). And triumphantly the bourgeoisie then proclaimed: “If you admit” (and science will admit it one century later), “that the same physical laws apply for the primordial nebula as for our planet today, then you must also admit, that the current social conditions will apply for all future societies, because we consensually banish both the intervention of god as well as pure thought from nature and society.” Marxism by contrast delivers the scientific proof, that within the social cosmos, a cycle carries out, which will destroy the capitalist forms and laws, and that the future social cosmos will adhere to other laws. Since you don’t mind to remodel and banalize this mighty work beyond ridiculousness because of domestic and foreign political purposes, finally do us the favour to omit the adjectives “Marxist,” “socialist” and “communist,” and instead use “economist,” “populist,” “progressive,” and it fits like a glove.

Marx and the laws

Engels acknowledged Marx as the founder of historical materialism. Marx explained, his contribution in the application of this theory to the modern world consisted not of discovering class struggle, but to introduce the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus, theory leads to the class and party programme, to the organization of the working class for the insurrection and the seizure of power. In this great perspective, the investigation of the laws of capitalism lines up. Two real and fundamental laws are put down in “Capital.” In the first volume, the general law of capitalist accumulation, also known as the law of increasing impoverishment (often dealt with by us): with the increasing concentration of capital the number of proletarians and the “reserve army” grows; we have explained multiple times already, that this not necessarily implies a fall in the level of consumption or real living standards of workers. In the second and third volume, the law of the reproduction of capital is developed (which is interrelated with the law of the tendency of the average rate of profit to fall, which we will get back to): a part of the product and thus of labour, must be put aside by the capitalist, to ensure the reproduction of depreciated machines, factories etc. (capital goods, for economists). If the

capitalist increases the share destined as reserve asserts, he “invests,” meaning he expands the stock of production facilities and means of production. Marx’s laws on the allocation of the social product between immediate consumption- and investment goods prove, that as long as commodity exchange and wage system persist, the system faces crises and revolutions.

The first law certainly cannot be applied to the socialist society, because it organizes precisely for the reason that the social reserve constitutes an individual security for everyone, although this reserve neither belongs to anybody, nor how in precapitalistic times, is divided into x little parts. The second law, Stalin tells us, persists in socialism; and he assures, Marx had foreseen that. Marxism merely established (among others in the known passage in the “Critique of the Gotha Programme”), that in communism there will be a social deduction of individual labour as well, to keep the production facilities in good condition, to ensure the public services etc. This deduction would not be of expropriative character, precisely because it doesn’t need to be mediated market-based and therefore the social reserve funds will establish a stable equilibrium – instead of serial tremors – namely between the products for consumption and the products which are included in the following cycle of production as means of production.

The crucial point in all that is the following: Stalin makes the valuable concession, that – because in the state industry the law of value is in effect – its businesses function based on “cost accounting and profitableness, production costs, prices, etc.” [Stalin, p.20]. For “etc.” we pose: profitable. Additionally, he explains that the future programme consists of an increase of the production of the means of production, meaning, that the “plans” of the Soviet government for the industrialization of the country not so much allow for goods of consumption for the population, but instead mainly consists of producing machines, agrarian tools, tractors, fertilizer etc. and to tackle giant public projects.

Plans aside: The capitalist states make plans, the proletarian dictatorship will make plans. But the first true socialist plan (which must be understood as an immediate despotic inroad, see the “Manifesto”) will eventually be a plan to the increase of the costs of production, shortening of the work day, divestment of capital, quantitative and especially qualitative levelling of consumption (which is under capitalist anarchy to nine tenths an absurd waste of product), because only in this way it will be possible to cope with “business profitability” and “profitable prices.” So, a plan of underproduction for the drastic reduction of the share of capital goods in production. The law of reproduction will run out of breath immediately, when the Marxian “department II” (production of means of consumption) eventually succeeds in knocking out “department I” (production of means of production). In any way, the capitalist “concert” has for too long punished our eardrums.

The means of consumption are for the workers, the means of production for the entrepreneurs. If the business master is the workers’ state, it shall of course immediately be accepted, that the workers are interested to “invest” and to sweat from four to eight hours for department I! If now Yaroshenko abridges the critique of the staggering increase of the means of production to the formula “primacy of consumption instead of primacy of production,” he becomes very mundane. No less shallow – to smuggle in state industrialism under socialist banner – are agitational formulas like: “He who doesn’t work shall not eat” or “Abolition of the expropriation of humans through humans,” as if it was the highest goal of the expropriated class to oversee its own expropriation.

Even if we only stick to the analysis of the domestic economy, the Russian economy in reality makes use of all laws of capitalism. How can it increase the production of goods not meant for consumption, without proletarianizing humans? Where shall it take the humans from? The course is that of primitive accumulation, and mostly the means are as horrible as those, that are depicted in “Capital”: sometime it hits the kolkhozniki, who suddenly stand there without their cow; sometime the nomadic shepherds of Asia, which get snatched from their submersion into the view of the Ursa Major; or the feudal serfs in Mongolia, which are uprooted from their millenniums-old soil. The slogan is with certainty: more production goods, more workers, longer work time, higher work intensity – in other words: expanded accumulation and reproduction of capital in infernal pace.

Precisely that is the honour, that we, in defiance of a bunch of dorks, bestow upon the “great Stalin.” Just in the dimension in which the process of the beginning accumulation of capital takes place and embraces the provinces of the giant China, the mysterious Tibet, the legendary Central Asia (out of which the European tribe emerged), will it be revolutionary and spin the wheel of history forward. But this is not a socialist, but a capitalist process. In this big part of the globe, the glorification of the development of productive forces is necessary. Stalin correctly says, that this is not his credit, but that of the economic laws, which enforces these “policies” upon him. His entire undertaking is made up of fraudulent labelling: this is as well a classical mean of the bearers of primitive accumulation!

In the west, however, the exuberant productive forces for a long time trigger flood waves, one after another, which prompts the states to suppress, to devour markets and regions, to prepare blood baths and wars. Here no plans to increase production help, instead only the plan to smash a gang of criminals can help here. Especially the plan, to trash their reeking flag of freedom and parliamentarism.

Socialism and Communism

We will conclude the economic argument with a synthesis of the stages of the future society – a topic, in which the whole of Stalin’s “document” (we were looking for that word the entire time) is causing confusion. “France Press” accused Stalin of plagiarizing the scripture of Nikolai Bukharin about the economic laws of the transition period. Stalin however mentions the texts

several times and even draws upon a critique authored by Lenin^[20]. Commissioned with the preparation of the programme of the Comintern (which stayed a draft), Bukharin deserves the great credit of emphasizing the commodity-negating postulate of the socialist revolution as an issue of primary importance. He also followed Lenin in the analysis of the transformation period “in Russia” and the assessment, that during the dictatorship of the proletariat, forms of commodity production were to be tolerated.

Everything becomes clear, if one bears in mind, that these investigations of Lenin and Bukharin didn’t concern themselves with the two stages of communist society, of which Marx talks and which Lenin in a wonderful passage of “State and Revolution” outlines, but with a phase, which precedes both those stages.

The following scheme can serve as a summary of the certainly not easy topic of today’s “dialogue.”

Transition stage: The proletariat has conquered political power and renders all non-proletarian classes politically powerless, precisely because it cannot “get rid” of those classes in an instant. This means, the proletarian state controls an economy, in which partly, even if in decreasing amount, both a market-based distribution as well as forms of private disposal of products and means of production exist (these be fragmented or concentrated). The economy is not yet socialist, it’s a transition economy.

Lower stage of communism, or if you want, socialism: society disposes already generally of products, which are allocated to members of society by quotas. This function doesn’t require commodity exchange or money anymore – one cannot let Stalin’s statement pass, according to which the simple exchange without money, but still based on the law of value, should bring us closer to communism: rather it is about a kind of regression to bartering. The allocation of products on the contrary follows from the center, without return of an equivalent. Example: If a malaria epidemic breaks out, in the affected region quinine is distributed for free, but solely one tubule per person.

In this phase, not only compulsory work is necessary, but also the recording of the performed labour time and its certificate – the famous “labour voucher,” so much discussed in the last century. The peculiarity of this certificate is, that it cannot be kept in reserve, so that any try to accumulate it leads to the loss of the performed labour quantum without compensation. The law of value is buried.

Engels: “Hence, on the assumptions we made above, society will not assign values to products.”

Higher stage of communism, which can be unhesitatingly can be called integral socialism: the productivity of labour is in such a way, that, apart from pathological cases, neither coercion nor rationing are necessary, to exclude the squandering of products and human energy. Free consumption for all. Example: The pharmacies are distributing quinine free and without constraints. And if one would take ten tubules to poison himself? He would obviously be just as stupid as the people, which confuse a rotten bourgeois society with socialism.

In which stage does Stalin find himself? In none of the three. He is in a transition period, not away from capitalism, but towards capitalism. It’s almost honourable and certainly not self poisoning.

Third Day (Morning)

On day one we argued the fact, that any system of commodity production is a capitalist system, ever since through the labour of masses of humans enormous accumulations of commodities are produced. Capitalism and commodity production will together fade out of the spheres of influence that they gradually conquered in the modern world.

On the second day this got taken up again; and coming from the general process to today’s Russian economy, we thought of the laws stated by Stalin regarding the structure of the Russian economy as appropriate. The diagnosis of pure capitalism, in the stage of “great state industrialism” was confirmed.

According to the notion of our dialogue partner, this sufficiently defined and concrete process can, applied to giant areas and populations, lead to the accumulation and concentration of a heavy industry, which doesn’t rank behind others, and indeed solely on the basis of the since 1917 ensued elimination of big landowners, without inevitably repeating, as at that time in England, France etc., horrible expropriation of the lower population strata, who are caught in the subsistent, local economic circles and the fragmented labour technique.

Would one only say with this last point, that the extensive introduction of modern labour technique with the means of applied science plays out entirely differently because of the changed situation all over the world, then was the case centuries ago, then this could be subject of a separate investigation, namely with the treatment of the “agrarian question.” Could be, that Stalin will show, attaining complete capitalism not by horse and cart, but by plane – but he should at least state the “direction.” We, the rank and file, transmit to him from many ground stations a set of data – however even the radar can go haywire.

And now a third point: the international relations within the complex overall context of production, exchange and consumption; political and military balances of power.

The three points are only aspects of one and the same big question. The first could be called the historical, the second the economic and the third the political aspect. Direction and goal of the investigation must be set in one.

Products and exchange

In his theoretical corrections and the correspondingly harsh referrals against the objections of the “comrades,” the Russian state and party leader apparently needs to change fronts every time, when he gets on from the circulation within the country borders to the transcending circulation. We already alluded, the reader will recall, that the western “border guards” at this point have perked up their ears. Far from again striking up the song of a millenarian autarky, the man in the Kremlin calmly has set the binoculars on the areas beyond the Iron Curtain; and old stories about the division of spheres of influence as an alternative to the sabre rattling and the abandonment of relations get a chance. At least one thing, that doesn’t sound as spectacular and impertinent, as the litany about genocide and craze of aggression.

Stalin claims, the manner, how within Russia (and the sister countries) industry items are assigned to the rural population and agrarian products to the urbanites, is perfectly in accordance with socialism – while slaying everyone and everything with quotes of Marx and Engels, and, when necessary, correcting their words, sentences and wordings ex officio. The kolkhozes “freely” sell their products – there is no other way of getting hold of their makings; so after all through the market, but there are special rules: state administered prices (Novelty! Specialty of the house!) and even special “contracts” about commodity deliveries with “non-commodity character”^[21], because the state business don’t operate with money, but undertake offset agreements (Highly original! Role models are the huckster at the next corner, the American marine, which precisely knows about the equivalence of kissing and cigarettes, and the mundane “clearings” of the western countries!). However, the master doesn’t find the expression “commodity delivery” appropriate, one should talk about product exchange. (Adding this only, so the mistake isn’t searched for in the translation). In short, all more or less conventional equivalent systems, from the barter of the savages to money as universal equivalent for all products, the gazillion systems to issue performance and reward, which reach from the housekeeping book to the complicated banking business, where electronic brains add up endless queues of numbers, while daily the stifling flood of kicking their heels sellers of labour power swells – why did all this emerge, what is it good for, if not for the exchange of products, and solely for it?

But Stalin wants to crack the gnawing core of the problem, namely, that out of the “salaries” of exchange between equivalents a private accumulation emerges; and he says, there were guarantees against that.

Even for a generalissimo it is difficult to stay in the saddle with such a thesis and alternately fence in two directions – one blow against theoretical rigour, one blow against the revisionist concessions. Elasticity of the real Leninist Bolshevism? No, eclecticism, was our answer; back then that was the last straw for the Bolsheviks.

Now, no matter in what shape the domestic conditions might be (whose investigation is neither finished today, nor in the scope of this study), as soon as the talk is of the foreign relations, even Stalin raises concerns. The comrade Notkin had to get an earful, because he claimed that even the machines and tools produced in the state businesses are commodities. They have value, their price is determined and yet they aren’t commodities? One can literally see Notkin being aghast. Value and price are, according to Stalin, “needed in order, in the interests of our foreign trade, to conduct sales of means of production to foreign countries. Here, in the sphere of foreign trade, but only in this sphere” (underlined in the original), “our means of production really are commodities, and really are sold (in the direct meaning of the term).” [Stalin, p. 53].

The last parentheses originate in the officially released text. Presumably the improvident Notkin put the word “sold,” which a Marxist and Bolshevik is quite fed up with, in quotes. He must have missed the latest training courses.

In a few years, we would be interested in the following information: The volume of the balance of trade please, so the ratio of commodity import and export. And another thing: should this balance turn out positively or negatively? From the so called law of the well-planned “proportional” development of the national economy we know that the social product should grow at a furious speed. We don’t speak Russian, but assume that thereby it is to be understood: plans for the “uninterrupted growth of production,” that is analogous to the law of population growth or compound interest. We therefore propose the following, correct denotation: planning of growth in geometric progression. The “curve” drawn right, we would write up the following law with the little brains we have: socialism starts where this curve breaks down.

For today we record Stalin’s concession: the products destined for foreign trade, among them the means of production, are commodities, not only “formally,” in accounting, but also in “character.”

That is one thing. It is enough to discuss across a few thousand kilometers to finally come to understanding regarding anything.

Profit and surplus value

A little bit more patience, then we will talk of high politics and strategy, and then the frowning will end, because everyone understands the point: will Caesar attack? Pompeius flee? Do we meet at Philippi again? Will we cross the Rubicon? That is welcomed fodder for conversation that lifts the spirits.

We must point to another point of Marxist political economy. The power of things leads the marshal to the explosive problem of the world market. The USSR, he says, supports its sister countries through economic aid, which accelerates their industrialization. Does that also apply for Czechoslovakia as well as China, that is, for an already capitalist country, as well as for a country, in which the capitalist mode of production is still in the early stages and only constitutes a fraction of aggregate production? Let's see. "It may be confidently said that, with this pace of industrial development, it will soon come to pass that these countries will not only be in no need of imports from capitalist countries, but will themselves feel the necessity of finding an outside market for their surplus products." [Stalin, p.32]. Which again brings up the question: if production (and export) is done for the west, then those are commodities; and if it is done for Russia, what are they then?

The point about this return to the system of commodity production, consummated with flying colours, which is identical with the capitalist system in form and character (if one does not fall for the economic make-up), is that it is founded on the imperative: export to produce more! Effectively it is the same imperative which also pertains within the supposed "socialist country": the relations between town and country, between the famous "associated classes," are about an import-export business, because here also, as already mentioned, the law of geometric progression applies, which says: more production! More production!

What remains of Marxism? Barely anything! Since "the working class, [is] now in power," it is "necessary" to "abandon" the offensive formulas which distinguish between necessary labour and surplus labour, paid and unpaid labour [Stalin, p.18/19]. While the law of surplus value (which here according to Stalin's criteria is a theory and not a law), first somewhat was spared, from today the following applies: "It is said that the law of the average rate of profit is the basic economic law of modern capitalism. That is not true. Modern capitalism, monopoly capitalism" (there you go: what did you know, poor Marx?) "cannot content it-self with the average profit, which moreover has a tendency to decline, in view of the increasing organic composition of capital. It is not the average profit, but the maximum profit that modern monopoly capitalism demands." While the subordinate clause ("which it needs...") seems to bring the extinguished Marxian law into being for a moment, the new law is decreed after all: The demand for maximum profit "will be the basic economic law of modern capitalism" [Stalin, p.39].

If the flamethrower in the library isn't halted, not even his moustache is going to be spared.

Those twisted counter-theses, which try to secure themselves against any objection, are unbearable. First, it is stated that the economic laws of monopoly capitalism would entirely differ from the capitalism "of Marx." And then the same counter-theses assert that the economic laws of socialism could very well be the same as those of capitalism. Fresh air, quick!

Let's heroically return to the ABC. One here has to remind of the distinction between the mass of profit and the mass of surplus value, between rate of profit and rate of surplus value, and of the meaning of the Marxian law of the tendency of the average rate of profit to fall, which is stated in detail at the beginning of the third "Capital" volume. Reading – understanding! It is not the capitalist that tends to decrease profit. It is not profit (the mass of profit) that decreases, but the rate of profit! Not the rate of any profit, but the average rate of social profit. Not any week or in any issue of the "Financial Times," but historically, in the development predestined by Marx towards the "social monopoly of the means of production" in the grip of capital, whose definition, genesis, life and death are written.

He who understands this, can see that the effort, not of the single capitalist (a minor figure in Marx), but of the historical machine of capital (this "ensouled corpus" talented with "vis vitalis"), to escape the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is futile; and precisely this law let's us conclude the following, classical theses (to which Stalin, confusing the west, again confesses):

First: Inevitability of war between the capitalist countries.

Second: Inevitability of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, wheresoever.

It is a giant effort that the capitalist system deploys in fight against its own collapse, and which expresses itself in the slogan: evermore production! Not only no stagnation, but achieving the maximization of the maximization at any time. In mathematics: geometrical progression; in music: "crescendo á la Rossini." And for that purpose (once the entire motherland is mechanized): export. And to memorise the doctrine of the last five centuries well: "Trade follows the flag."

But that, Jughashvili, is their doctrine!

Engels and Marx

For our line of argument, we once again have to return to Marx and Engels. This time not to the self-contained and complete texts, as if made from one piece by one or the other, written with full power and the groundbreaking eagerness of those who know neither doubt, nor are flustered and who remove obstacles in the way, without caring about their resistance. It is about the Marx, of

which his “executor of testament” gives account in the almost dramatic prefaces to the II. (5.5.1885) and to the III. (4.10.1894) volume of “Capital.” First it is about explaining the state of the enormous mass of materials and manuscripts – they reach from chapters in elaborated form to loose pages, notices, summaries, illegible abbreviations, promises regarding later to be developed points, as well as uncertainly and cautiously composed pages provided with annotations – with the deteriorating health of Marx, with the inescapable ramifications of the progressing disease which forces interruptions upon him, which quail and attack the mighty brain more than rest lets him heal. The work accomplished by this human machine between the years 1863 and 1867, among it the flawlessly composed first volume of his main work, is immeasurable. Already in the years 1864 to 1865 the disease showed first signs of health disorders; the imperturbable sight of his great “colleague” Engels notices the traces of its devastating aftermaths in the unreleased notebooks. But after that the same bone-grinding work – deciphering, examining, dictating, reorganizing of texts, classification of material: all that with the will not to compose anything distinct – exceeds also the power of the extremely robust Engels. For too long he spent nights awake over the scriptures of his friend; a worrying eye weakness “for years [restricts] [his] writing time to a minimum,” as he got disallowed from “taking the quill into the hand under artificial light.” Neither defeated nor discouraged he apologizes sincerely and humbly to the task – more was not granted to him. Modestly he reminds of all the other areas, in which the brunt more and more fell to him “solely.” One year later, he died.

This is neither incidental nor conceited. It should only make clear that the aspiration of editorial diligence which determined Engels’ compilation work engendered that in the last two volumes of Capital the periodically returning sections of synthesis and summary almost fully are missing. Engels’ quill we also owe such parentheses, and not few or of little use of them; but he doesn’t want to manage something “which just wasn’t in Marx’ book,” and so he confines himself to analysis. Had it been different, certain shady interpretations (today as half a century ago) would have been futile, for example the sad legend, according to which Marx in the third and last volume revoked – according to the personal taste of the author: in the philosophy, the economic science or the politics – something. In truth in the first volume there are as many explicit references to the early scriptures or the “Manifesto” as connections between the last two scriptures and the first volume – thousands of passage of correspondence reinforce this.

Here it is even less than in Engels’ work about conducting “Capital research.” Let’s just remark that Marx in one of those short summaries says, why he is so thoroughly dealing with the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Engels hesitates to recite the fragment and puts it in parentheses, “because, though a rehash of the notes of the original manuscript, it goes in some points beyond the scope of the material found in the original.”

“[The law of increased productivity of labour is not, therefore, absolutely valid for capital. So far as capital is concerned, productiveness does not increase through a saving in living labour in general, but only through a saving in the paid portion of living labour, as compared to labour expended in the past, as we have already indicated in passing in Book I (Ch. XI II, 2, 5. 409/398). Here the capitalist mode of production is beset with another contradiction. Its historical mission is unconstrained development in geometrical progression of the productivity of human labour. It goes back on its mission whenever, as here, it checks the development of productivity. It thus demonstrates again that it is becoming senile and that it is more and more outlived.]”

Unaffected by the pharisaic objection that after another 60 years of capitalism (however with a strong dash of decay) one should with the as always “careless” Marx triple the parentheses instead of cancel them out, we emphasize the programmatic theses which Marx so “gladly” inserted in the discerning and profound analyses. So capitalism will collapse. And post-capitalism? It is like that: As the productivity of every work unit increases, we do not increase the mass of products, but decrease the working time of the living. Why does the West not want to know something about that? Because there is only one single way to flee from the law of the fall in the rate of profit: overproduction. And the East? Ditto. But for the sake of fairness let’s remark that capitalism there is still undergoing its adolescence.

Rate and Mass

It is time to again turn towards the deduction of the law: As long as we are not smitten with blindness, it is anyway not on the scrap heap. We will there circumvent both the language of numbers as well as algebraic symbolism and, as far as possible, preserve the brevity and the polish of the fable. “Could commodities themselves speak,” Marx says in one of those wonderful passages of “Capital,” “they would say: Our use value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange values.”

So we attached a microphone on the marketplace on which the commodities hailing from Russia and America meet. The ones from the “higher levels” have allowed them to speak a common economic language. For both commodities, the sacrosanct principle applies that the targeted market price must lie above the cost of production (otherwise they would not have travelled the long way). In both homelands one is concerned with producing them at low cost and to sell at high price.

The commodity hailing from the land of capitalist theory has the word: “I am made of two parts and therefore only one weld is visible on me: the cost of production (a living and used up advance of my producer) and the profit, that together add up to the precise sum below I, don’t delude yourselves, don’t meet my principles. To encourage the buyer, I content myself with a modest

profit: through a simple calculation – profit divided by cost of production – you can check the rate of this profit. Suppose my cost is 10 and you can own me for 11, do you want to be stingy and claim that the ten percent rate is excessively high? Step right up, ladies and gentlemen...”

We now hand the microphone to the other commodity. It talks like this: “For us Marxist economics is critical. You see two welds on me. I have no reason to hide that: Because I consist of three and not of two parts. The trick with the other commodity is that it isn’t visible there. To produce me, there are two expenditures: raw materials, consumption of instruments of production and suchlike, which we call constant capital invested in me – and the compensation of human labour, which we call variable capital. The sum forms what the lady before me called cost of production. For me as well you have to add a yield, an earning or profit, which is my third and last part: called surplus value. For the advanced constant capital, we calculate nothing on top, as we know that it does not add value: only labour, meaning the variable part of the advance creates value. So, if you want to determine the percentage or the rate, not of profit but of surplus value, it is very easy as well: you just have to divide the surplus value by the second part of the capital advanced for me, that is, the wages.”

Whereupon the ordinary buyer replies: “Explain that to your hairdresser! The only thing my wallet is interested in is the end cost, that is, your respective sale price.”

There is spat between the two commodities, in which each claims to want to close the less profitable deal and to settle for the lowest profit rate. As neither of them can press it down to zero, the one that actually has the lowest cost of production wins, as Stalin also incessantly indicates. For the constant part, quantity and quality of raw materials are given. The competition in both export countries is staged on the variable part. And certainly, there is the solution to pay the workers less, to let them work longer, but predominantly labour productivity is backed, which is conditioned by technological progress, the use of more powerful machines and the ever more rational organization of firms. Already both sides are displaying glossy prints of their large-scale plants, where each prides itself in having reduced the number of employees at constant or larger scale of production. But one thing that the buyers care even less about is knowing on which side of the contested market the workers are being paid and treated better.

The reader will, so we think, without effort determine the difference between both methods of value analysis. The rate of surplus value is always much higher than the rate of profit, and all the more as the constant capital outweighs the variable.

Now, the Marxian law of the fall of the average rate of profit deals with profit as a whole, that is, the total return of all spheres of production, regardless of the later to deal with distribution (between the banker, the industrialist and the landowner). In the 13. chapter of the third volume of “Capital,” Marx reminds: “We intentionally present this law before going on to the division of profit” (“Profit is for us, for the time being, only another name for or another category of surplus value”) “into different independent categories.” This “shows from the outset that this law is, in its entirety, independent of this division.” And so it also applies if the state behaves as owner, banker and entrepreneur.

The law is based on the general historical process – denied by no one, apologized for by everyone – of the incessant development of productivity due to the application of ever more complicated instruments, tools, machines, ever more diverse technical processes and of scientific achievements on manual labour. For a given mass of products, fewer and fewer workers are needed. The capital advanced that needed to be invested to get hands on this mass of products continuously changes what Marx calls the organic composition: ever more substance-based capital, ever less wage capital. Few workers suffice to bestow an enormous “increase in value” on the to be processed material, because they can process a lot more of it in comparison to the past. In this too one agrees. And further? Even assumed that capital exacerbates exploitation and increases the rate of surplus value by paying the workers less (even though this often happens, it only has the character of a law from the point of view of lounge revolutionaries), the squeezed out surplus value, respectively profit, will indeed increase, in face of the much stronger increase of the mass of purchased raw materials, with equal number of labour powers, the profit rate will continue to fall: Precisely because the rate expresses the relation of the slightly bigger profit (profit mass) to the enormously increased total advance in wages and material.

Capital demands the “maximum profit”? For sure, it demands it and it finds it as well, but it cannot prevent that meanwhile the profit rate falls. The mass of profit increases, because the population and still more the proletariat grows, the processed material becomes ever more impressive and the mass of products increases. In infancy: small capitals, divided between many and invested at a good rate; in old age: giant capitals, divided on few (consequence of concentration which develops in parallel to accumulation), admittedly invested at a low rate, however with the result of the exorbitant, vertigo-inducing increase of social capital, of social profit, of average business capital and profit.

There is no contradiction with the Marxian law of the fall in the rate of profit, which could only be detained by the reduction of labour productivity, by “degeneration” of the organic composition of capital; an issue against which Stalin at the moment hauls out the big guns, a terrain on which he desperately tries to subdue his enemies.

19th and 20th century

In no. 2 (1952) of "Il programma comunista" we published some plain numbers from capitalist sources about the American economy. They prove the law determined by Marx and negated by Stalin. According to statistics 1848, that is, at the appearance of industrial capitalism in the USA, of 1000 value units which were added to the processed material in the process of production, 510 units went as wages to the workers and 490 as profit to the entrepreneurs. If one disregards depreciation of machines, general expenses etc., those numbers on the one hand represent variable capital, on the other hand represent surplus value. Their ratio, or the rate of surplus value, is 96%.

How did the bourgeois calculate the rate of profit? To answer this, we have to know the value of the processed raw materials. We can only guess it, by assuming the hypothesis that in the crawling phase of industry every worker produces the quadruple of his wage on average. If the wages amount to 510, the constitute 2.040 units. The costs of production amount to 2.550 in total. High rate of profit: 19,2%. We notice anyway that it always lies beneath the rate of surplus value.

In the year 1929, after a long cycle of insane growth, the workers only received 362 of 1.000 newly added value units, the capitalists however 638. Don't start to get confused now: Until "black Friday" the wages increased, and the living standard of the workers increased strongly – that doesn't change a thing. As one sees, the rate of surplus value, respectively exploitation increased drastically: from 96% to 176%. If now, after one has written one's fingers to the bone, there is still someone who doesn't understand that one can be exploited even more despite higher wages and better food, then he should go home! He has not understood the consequences of the increased productivity of labour power, consisting of sweat and blood of hard workers and ending up in the pockets of the bourgeois.

Let's now determine the value of total production. Let's assume that between 1848 and 1929 thanks to improved machines and with same number of workers ten times more raw materials than before could be processed. We can quietly assume those low numbers: with the certainty of one, who is somewhat familiar with scientific syntheses and therefore without problems starts with preconditions which are inconvenient for the own thesis and which benefit the enemy, those hair-splitters, which take delight in checking everything fifteen times. Because the workers now receive 362 as opposed to the 510 before, one could think that the share in raw materials decreased from 2.040 to 1.448; the opposite is the case: the share rises to 14.480. With a total expense of 14.842 in investments and a profit of 638, one has a rate of profit of about 4,5%. The fall of the rate of profit: here we have it. It is enough to pull off one's head before Marx; it is not necessary to hand a tissue to "Uncle Sam" to dry his crocodile tears! You have understood, we searched for the rate and not the mass of profit. To get an image of the total extent of production – even if not in real values, then still in form of a comparison between both epochs – one has to consider that a national product of 3040 in the year 1848 is faced with 15.480 in 1929: with non-noteworthy increase of worker hands. In reality however, the worker population has multiplied by ten in the course of the 80 years. One can thus estimate the total product at 154.800, about the fiftyfold of the year 1848. While the average rate of profit of the factory owners fell from 19,2% to 4,3%, the mass of profit increased from 490 to 6.390, meaning it is fourteen times as high. Surely our numbers are still far too modest. Important was only to prove, that American capitalism in the race to the maximum profit adheres to the law of the fall in the rate of profit. Stalin cannot educe any new laws from it. Additionally, we didn't account for the concentration; if we apply a factor of 10 here, the average profit (in mass) of the American enterprises amounts to the 140-fold. There it is: the course for crisis, and the confirmation of Marxism.

We will allow ourselves an even bolder calculation now. Let's assume the American working class assumes power in a situation as in that of 1929; let's repeat the numbers: 14.480 raw materials, 362 labour powers, 638 profit, meaning 15.480 total product.

And then the workers read Marx and use "the increased productive power of capital for the saving of living labour as such." A decree of the revolutionary committee pushes down production to 10.000 (where it is pushed down we will see; remind yourselves that there won't be any presidential elections or similar events anymore). The workers will first settle for not adding the entire profit (which is burdened with dues and general expenses) to their wage of 362, but much less, so they arrive at, let's say 500. For the functioning of public facilities and state-run administrative bodies we deduce even more than the 638 of the now removed capitalists, let's say 700. According to our calculation there are only 8.800 of to be processed raw materials instead of 14.480; if the number of workers stays constant, the working day of each is reduced by 40%: from 8 to less than 5 hours. As a first step, that's neat. If we now calculate the hourly wage, we would see that it increased by about 132 percent: from a bit, more of 44 to about 103.

This would not be socialism. But while Stalin assumes to have discovered a new law of socialism, which is in truth a law of capitalism (with the increase of labour productivity production grows), we confront him with the opposite law: the increase of productivity leads to the decrease of human labour effort, where the extent of production either stays constant or later, after the poison dripping and blood sucking branches of the capitalist trunk has been removed, begins to increase in a smooth curve and in a way adequate for humanity.

As long as the call resounds to increase production by mobilization of all powers, that just means to desperately resist against the Marxian law of the fall of the rate of profit. Because the rate of profit decreases, even though the mass of surplus value and profit do not decrease, progress rhetoric and hurries will shout at a scampered humanity ever more loudly: work more, produce more! And when the local workers faced with their frugal compensation cannot buy the surplus product, one needs to find means to conquer markets in foreign countries to ensure consumption. That is the vicious cycle of imperialism, which inevitably has found its solution in war – and a temporary escape from the final crisis in the reconstruction of the destroyed works of humanity, created in centuries.

Reconstruction of the destroyed, then construction of capitalist production facilities in vast areas, and today the race for markets: Those are all rails which Stalin is following; and this train, undertaken by whoever, knows only two changing points: low costs of production or war.

We will finish the depiction of this fundamental law with another wording about capitalism, which Marx adds in the fifteenth chapter of the third volume. As always, it simultaneously stands for the programme of communist society.

“Three cardinal facts of capitalist production:

1) Concentration of means of production in few hands, whereby they cease to appear as the property of the immediate labourers and turn into social production capacities. Even if initially they are the private property of capitalists. These are the trustees of bourgeois society, but they pocket all the proceeds of this trusteeship.

2) Organisation of labour itself into social labour: through co-operation, division of labour, and the uniting of labour with the natural sciences.

In these two senses, the capitalist mode of production abolishes private property and private labour, even though in contradictory forms.

3) Creation of the world-market.”

As usual the “thread” lead us where it needed to lead us. And the reader should know that the “day” still has not drawn to a close, but that it is only noon. The “morning” might have been as hard and complicated as a symphony by Wagner.

Will the concluding “afternoon” play a lighter music on the steep way? Maybe. “L’après-midi d’une faune”^[22]? However, our faun appears in the coarse figure and with the threatening gesture of the blood red mars.

Third Day (Afternoon)

On the first two days and during today’s morning we dealt with all passages in Stalin’s scripture which allow to find those laws by which the Russian economy can be directed.

In theoretical regard, we have fundamentally refuted that an economy denoted by such laws could be defined as socialism or its lower stage, equally we disputed that one is able to appoint to Marx’s and Engels’ fundamental texts for such a purpose. In those scriptures, we find, even if not in the banal ease which one glazes over a comic, the economic characteristics of capitalism, as well as those of socialism and the phenomena which allow to verify the economic transition from one to the other mode of production.

In empirical regard, we could draw a series of definite conclusions. In the Russian domestic market, the law of value prevails; therefore:

The products have commodity character; A market exists; The exchange takes place, according to the law of value, between equivalents; and the equivalents have a monetary expression.

The great mass of agrarian businesses works solely with regard to commodity production and partly in form of an individual appropriation of products on the side of parcel farmers (which in the other part of his labour time functions as cooperative farmer, kolkhozniki), a form therefore, which is even further away from socialism, in some sense precapitalistic and barter economic.

The small and medium sized businesses, which manufacture factory commodities, also work for sales on the market.

The large enterprises finally are owned by the state, which doesn’t mean much: their bookkeeping carries a monetary character and by prices – in which the reign of the law of value is already implied – expenditures (for raw materials, wages) and revenues (sold products) are confronted with each other, therefore audited whether the enterprises operate viable, meaning whether they yield a profit, a surplus.

The reasoning about the scope of the Marxist law of the rate of profit and its fall was good for exposing Stalin’s hollow antithesis: Because the proletariat wielded power, the gigantic apparatus of nationalized industry wouldn’t aim for maximum profit (like in the capitalist countries), but is concerned for the maximum welfare of the workers and the people.

Towards the thesis according to which between the interests of the workers in the state industry and those of the “Soviet people” – this mishmash of individual- and cooperative farmers, hucksters, managers of small and mid-sized industrial firms and so on – there weren’t any fundamental antagonisms, not on the level of daily demands either, we have the biggest reservations. But apart from that, we have got the proof precisely out of the “law of the planned development of the national economy in geometrical progression” confirmed by Stalin, that the capitalist law of the fall in the rate of profit is in effect. If a five year plan purports an increase in production by 20%, meaning from 100 to 120, and the following plan again purports a growth of 20%, then this means that production should not grow from 120 to 140, but from 120 to 144 (20% increase of the new cycle, which now starts with 120). He who is a bit familiar with numbers knows that the difference at the start seems marginal, later however assumes gigantic

magnitudes. Do you remember the story of the creator of chess, who wanted to make a present to the emperor of China? He asked for one corn on the first square, two on the second, four on the third... all corn chambers of the heavenly empire wouldn't have sufficed to fill the 64 squares.

Now, his law is de facto nothing else than the categorical imperative: produce evermore! This imperative belongs solely to capitalism and the following chain of causes is at its foundation: Increase of labour productivity – increase of constant capital in relation to variable capital, thus the organic composition – fall in the rate of profit – necessity to compensate the fall with the rampant increase of capital investments and production of commodities.

If we had really started to build up the socialist economy in a rudimentary way, we would have noticed that the economic imperative had changed, and that it would have turned out to be ours: since the power of human labour is multiplied by technical achievements: with steady production, work less! And where the conditions of a revolutionary power of the proletariat really do exist, that is to say, in those countries which are already over-equipped with facilities: produce less and work even less!

The mere fact that Russia has to issue the slogan of “increasing product mass” confirms our thesis. It is finally confirmed by the fact that a significant proportion of the products of major state-owned industry are sold on foreign markets, and here Stalin openly states that the relationship is not only for accounting purposes, but by the very nature of things a commodity relation.

Basically, this includes the confession that “building socialism in one country” is not possible, even if it were only because of worldwide competition (which is always prepared to shoot with cannons and atomic bombs instead of the artillery of low prices). Only in the absurd hypothesis that the “socialist country” could close itself off behind a real iron curtain would it be possible for the country to take the first steps in one direction (planning “by society in the interest of society”), which, thanks to the labour productivity achieved by technical achievements, would lead to a reduction in labour efforts and exploitation of the worker. And only within such a hypothesis could the plan be, after the insane geometric curve of capitalist madness has been abandoned: Let us determine a certain standard of consumption for all residents, set by the plan; once we have reached that level, we will stop production and resist the criminal temptation to push it further, just to see where we get rid of it again, who we can force it on.

However, the Kremlin's full attention, both ideologically and practically, is focused on the world market.

Competition and Monopoly

A superficial approach places the Marxist theories of modern colonialism and imperialism next to the Marxist description of capitalism of free competition (which supposedly unfolded until about 1880), as if these were different treatises or at best supplements.

In various speeches we have insisted that the allegedly sober description of a “liberal” and “peaceful” capitalism in Marx, which by the way never existed, is in reality nothing more than a gigantic “polemical demonstration from a party and class point of view,” on the basis of which – if one recognises for a moment that capitalism functions in accordance with the unrestricted dynamics of free exchange between the bearers of equivalent values (which doesn't express anything else than the famous law of value) – the character of capitalism can be conceived: Namely, to be a societal class monopoly which, from the first episodes of primitive accumulation up to today's robbery, incessantly strives to heist the generated “balances” under the mask of the contractually secured, free and equal exchange.

Starting from the exchange of equal commodity values, Marx shows the creation of surplus value, which is invested, leading to the accumulation of new, increasingly concentrated capital; he further shows that the only way (compatible with the continuation of capitalist production) to resolve the contradiction between the accumulation of wealth on one pole and the accumulation of misery on the opposite pole and to escape the resulting law of the fall in the rate of profit is to produce more and more beyond what is necessary for consumption; by pointing this out, it becomes clear that from the outset the clash between the capitalist countries is looming; everyone feels the irresistible urge to sell their own commodities on the territory of the other and to avert their own crisis by stirring it up at the rival.

Official economics tried in vain to prove the possibility of achieving a stable equilibrium on the world market with the rules and mechanisms of commodity production, even claiming that crises would be a thing of the past once the “civilized” organization of capitalism had spread everywhere. That is why Marx had to engage in an abstract discussion of the laws of a single, non-exporting, fictitious country of fully developed capitalism – and he proved that this country will “explode.” It is all the more obvious that, where the above-mentioned commodity relations arise between two closed economic zones, they are not an element of pacification but one of shock and the thesis of the “civilized world organization” becomes all the more obsolete. Only in one case would we be in serious theoretical embarrassment: if the first 50 years of this century had continued to be wrapped in economic and political cotton wool, with serious free trade, neutrality and disarmament agreements. Since the world on the contrary has become a hundred times more capitalist, it has been shaken a hundred times more by earthquakes in every respect.

To show who doesn't twist the words here, we quote a footnote from the 24th chapter of Capital volume I: "We here take no account of export trade, by means of which a nation can change articles of luxury either into means of production or means of subsistence, and vice versa. In order to examine the object of our investigation in its integrity, free from all disturbing subsidiary circumstances, we must treat the whole world as one nation, and assume that capitalist production is everywhere established and has possessed itself of every branch of industry."

The work of Marx – in which, as we always emphasize, theory and programme form an inseparable whole – was conceived from the outset in such a way that it concludes with the phase in which the contradictions of the first capitalist centers are reproduced on an international level. The demonstration that a "social partnership" between the social classes of a country is impossible as a definitive solution and regressive as a temporary solution, attends the in all points analogous demonstration of the illusory character of a peace treaty between states.

It has been recalled several times that in the preface to his 1859 book "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," Marx outlined the order of the headings as follows: "capital, landed property, wage-labour; the State, foreign trade, world market. The economic conditions of existence of the three great classes into which modern bourgeois society is divided are analysed under the first three headings;" and he adds: "the interconnection of the other three headings is self-evident."

When Marx began writing down "Capital," whose first part integrates the subject of "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," the plan was on the one hand deepened and on the other hand it seemed to be restricted. In the preface to the first volume ("The Process of Production of Capital") Marx announced that the II. volume deals with the "process of circulation" (simple and extended reproduction of the capital invested in production) and the III. would deal with "the forms assumed by capital in the course of its development." Apart from book IV about the history of the theories of value, whose materials have been available since the "Critique," volume III indeed deals with the representation of the overall process, examines the distribution of surplus value between industrialists, landowners and bankers, and concludes with the "discontinued" chapter on "The classes." The final version was obviously intended to develop the question of the state and the international market, for which the preparatory work had been done before and after Capital in other landmark texts of Marxism.

Markets and Empires

Already in the "Manifesto" and the volume I of Capital, the emergence of the overseas market in the wake of the geographic discoveries of the 15th century is highlighted as a fundamental factor of capitalist accumulation and the primary importance of the trade wars between Portugal, Spain, Holland, France and England is pointed out.

At the time of the polemical and class-struggling portrayal of "typical" capitalism, the English Empire dominated the world stage, and so Marx and Engels paid the greatest attention to it and its economy. In theory, this economy pretended to be liberalism; in reality, it was an imperialism that had held the world monopoly at least since 1855. In "Imperialism," Lenin refers in this respect to letters from Engels and to the foreword that he 1892 put in front of the new edition of his study "The Situation of the Working Class in England" of 1844. Engels refused to "strike out of the text the many prophecies, amongst others that of an imminent social revolution in England" from the text bearing the "stamp of the author's youth." Much more important to him seemed to have foreseen that England would lose its industrial world monopoly; and he was right a thousand times. While the "world market and colonial monopoly" had the effect of putting the English proletariat to sleep – the world's first proletariat with a pronounced class character – the end of the British monopoly spread the seeds of class struggle and revolution throughout the world. Clearly, this takes more time than in the "fictitious single, thoroughly capitalist country"; but for us, the revolutionary solution is already theoretically foreseen, the detours and reasons for its "postponement" only confirm its validity. It will come.

Let's go back to the foreword by Engels (which is reproduced a little differently in Lenin's case): "The Free Trade theory was based upon one assumption: that England was to be the one great manufacturing centre of an agricultural world. And the actual fact is that this assumption has turned out to be a pure delusion. The conditions of modern industry, steam-power and machinery, can be established wherever there is fuel, especially coals. And other countries besides England-France, Belgium, Germany, America, even Russia have coals. And the people over there did not see the advantage of being turned into Irish pauper farmers merely for the greater wealth and glory of English capitalists. They set resolutely about manufacturing, not only for themselves, but for the rest of the world; and the consequence is that the manufacturing monopoly enjoyed by England for nearly a century is irretrievably broken up."

A paradox? We could only refute the comedy of "liberal" capitalism because this was the – for a limited period – unprecedented historical fall of a world monopoly. "Laissez faire, laissez passer"^[23], but keep the fleet (larger than all the others put together) on alert so that none of the Napoleons escape from the Saint Helena's....

In the "morning" we have quoted a passage from volume III, concluding a new synthesis of capitalist characteristics with the words: "Creation of the world-market." It will not do us any harm to repeat another powerful passage.

“The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself. It is that capital and its self-expansion appear as the starting and the closing point, the motive and the purpose of production; that production is only production for capital and not vice versa, the means of production are not mere means for a constant expansion of the living process of the society of producers. The limits within which the preservation and self-expansion of the value of capital resting on the expropriation and pauperisation of the great mass of producers can alone move – these limits come continually into conflict with the methods of production employed by capital for its purposes, which drive towards unlimited extension of production, towards production as an end in itself, towards unconditional development of the social productivity of labour. The means – unconditional development of the productive forces of society – comes continually into conflict with the limited purpose, the self-expansion of the existing capital. The capitalist mode of production is, for this reason, a historical means of developing the material forces of production and creating an appropriate world-market and is, at the same time, a continual conflict between this its historical task and its own corresponding relations of social production.”

Once again, it remains true: Russian “economic policy” has certainly developed the material productive forces, has indeed expanded the world market, but within the capitalist forms of production. It does indeed represent a useful historical tool: no less than the industrial invasion at the expense of the starving Scots and Irish or the Wild West Indians, but it cannot loosen the relentless grip of the contradictions of capitalism, which very well potentiates the forces of society, but which for that must debilitate and subjugate the workers’ association.

No matter from which side you look at it, the end point is always the world market – just as with Stalin. It has never been “uniform,” except in abstract terms, as in that hypothetical country of absolute and chemically pure capitalism, whose unrealizability we have mathematically proven. Should it ever arise, it would immediately disintegrate into its individual parts, such as certain atoms and crystals that only exist for a fraction of a second. Therefore, when the dream of a unified sterling market had been over, Lenin was able to give a fitting description of the colonial and semi-colonial division of the world between five or six imperialist monster states on the eve of World War I. The war was not followed by a system of equilibrium, but by a new and different division; even Stalin admits, that Germany “having broken out of bondage and taken the path of independent development,” had reason to turn its forces against the imperialist Franco-English-American bloc during the Second World War. But how can all this be reconciled with the hypocritical propaganda that for years represented the war of this bloc as non-imperialist, even “democratic”? How can this be reconciled with the hysterical shouting about the pardon of the “war criminal” Kesselring^[24]? Woe betide comrades Tomovich, Dickovich and Harryvich if they dare to ask such questions!

So, new division of the world, and a new reason to wage war. Before coming to Stalin’s judgement of the division resulting after the Second World War, we cannot resist the temptation to mention another passage from Lenin’s “imperialism,” which we dedicate in particular to the economic part of the “dialogue” of the previous days. Lenin mocks a German economist named Liefmann, who wrote the following song of praise for imperialism: “Commerce is an occupation having for its object the collection, storage and supply of goods.” Lenin gives him a blow that hits him with many other Liefmanns: “From this it would follow that commerce existed in the time of primitive man, who knew nothing about exchange, and that it will exist under socialism!” The exclamation mark is of course from Lenin. Moscow, where will you put it?

Latitude and longitude degrees

According to Stalin, the most important economic outcome of the Second World War is not so much to have knocked out two major industrialised countries, namely Germany and Japan (although disregarding Italy), in search of sales markets, but rather to have split the world market into two parts. First he uses the expression “disintegration,” then he specifies “that the single all-embracing world market disintegrated, so that now we have two parallel world markets, also confronting one another.” It is clear who these two camps should be: on the one hand, the United States, England, France and all the countries that first came under the spell of the Marshall Plan for European “reconstruction,” then the North Atlantic Pact for “defence,” better the rearmament of Europe and the West; On the other hand, Russia, which together with the “people’s democratic countries” and China, which are exposed to a blockade, forms a new, separate market. Geographically, this is correct, but the wording is not very fortunate (save for the usual translation errors). Let us assume for a moment that, on the eve of the Second World War, there would have been a genuine, uniform world market, the trading places of which would have been accessible to all products from all countries, then it would not have been able to disintegrate into “two world markets,” but the world market would have ceased to exist and would have been replaced by two international markets, separated by a rigorous curtain which would not allow commodities and payments to pass through (theoretically, and only according to what the customs authorities are aware of, which is very little today). Two such markets are now facing each other, but in parallel, indirectly admitting that the domestic economies of the two major camps into which this globe is divided are “parallel,” i. e. of the same historical type; this is consistent with our theoretical treatise and contradicts the thesis that Stalin’s writings are intended to put into circulation. In both camps the market exists, ergo the commodity system, ergo the capitalist economy. So we allow the expression of the parallel markets to pass through, but what we completely reject is the definition according to which there is a capitalist market in the West and a socialist one in the East, a *contradictio in adjecto*^[25].

Well: Two “half-world” markets, whose dividing line, by the way – at least if it is about the more developed part of the populated world – does not run on a parallel circle or latitude, but on the longitude of the defeated Berlin. This line leads Stalin to a most remarkable conclusion (especially when compared to the failed hypothesis of the single world market, which would have been either under the control of a confederation of all winning states or under the sole control of the Western bloc led by the United States), namely, that the sphere of exploitation of the world’s resources by the major capitalist countries (U.S.A., Britain, France) will not expand, but contract; that their opportunities for sale in the world market” (means: on the foreign market) “will deteriorate, and that their industries will be operating more and more below capacity. That, in fact, is what is meant by the deepening of the general crisis of the world capitalist system in connection with the disintegration of the world market.”

This has, of course, stirred up some dust; while various puppets have been sent off, of the batch of an Ehrenburg or a Nenni^[26] to fight for “peaceful coexistence” and “competition” between the parallel economic areas, Moscow is sending the message that it is still expecting the West to suffocate under a mountain of unsalable commodities (which could not even be given away because then the debts would pile up even more) and blow up as a result of this crisis. Not even in the unbridled arms race or in the Korean war and other imperialist raids, Moscow sees an opportunity to save the West.

If this has shaken the bourgeoisie, it is not enough to get us Marxists going. We have to ask what will determine such a process in the other “parallel” camp – on the basis of the official text we have already shown that it is subject to the same constraints: produce more and sell more products to the outside world. And then, as always, we must draw the decisive conclusions from the rise of this historical movement [of Stalinism] and the contradiction that we are witnessing today: On the one hand, the posthumous attempt to “rehabilitate” Marx/Lenin’s revolutionary vision of the future – accumulation, overproduction, crisis, war, revolution; on the other hand, in the course of a long period of development, to have established virtually irreversible historical and political positions that are still persistently defended by the “communist” parties operating in the West (which will soon be plagued by the crisis) and diametrically contradict any unfolding of class antagonism and the revolutionary preparation of the masses.

Classes and States

Before the First World War, two perspectives collide. The inevitable dispute over the markets will lead to war; regardless of who wins from the war, imperialist tensions will persist until the proletarian revolution or until a new global conflict: that is Lenin’s perspective. The opposite is the traitor of the working class and the International: after the suppression of the “aggressor” (Germany), the world will again be civilised, peaceful and open to “social progress.” Different perspectives correspond to different solutions: the traitors call for national Burgfrieden, Lenin for revolutionary defeatism within each nation.

The war was postponed until 1914, because the world market was still in its “formation phase” in the Marxist sense. As we have shown with regard to capitalist commodity production, the Marxist basic concept of “creation of the world market” is based on the limited “spheres of life and spheres of action” characterizing pre-capitalism, in which a local, self-sufficient economy is used to produce and consume (as in the aristocratic principalities and Asian feudal states) is dissolved in the single economic magma of commodity trade and sales. As long as these “oil stains” of the autarchic economies “merge” with the universal solvent of capitalism both internally and externally, the bourgeois bubble of production can sustain the tempo of its “geometric” swelling without bursting. However this is not yet the reason why these islands will enter into a global and unified market that is free of barriers: Protectionism is an ancient affair for the national territories, and for the foreign trade centres discovered by seafarers it applies that the various nations are trying to place them under their monopoly – be it by means of concessions from the colourful rulers and tribal princes; be it through trading companies, such as those of the Dutch, Portuguese and English; or be it under the protection of the war fleet and, in the beginning, even the pirate ships of roaming “marine partisans.”

In any case, according to Lenin, we are not only facing an almost worldwide saturation, but the ones who have arrived most recently are in a crisis on the sales markets; hence the war.

Second World War. According to Stalin, Germany’s reappearance as a large industrialized country was at the instigation of the Western powers, who were only too happy to rearm the stronghold against Russia. In reality, the reasons for this are primarily to be seen in the fact that the German territory was not devastated during the war and was not occupied by military forces after the ceasefire. In the same breath, Stalin admits that the imperialist and economic causes, and not the “political” and “ideological” ones, were decisive for the outbreak of the Second World War, especially since Germany had rushed first to the West and not to Russia. Thus it remains true that the war of 1939-45 was an imperialist war. Consequently, there were again the two perspectives: either new wars (irrespective of who would win) or revolution (provided that the war would not be responded to with national “social partnership” but with class struggle) and, in contrast, the bourgeois perspective, identical to that of the First World War: Everything depends on the repression of the criminal Germany; if this succeeds, the way is clear for peace, general disarmament, freedom and prosperity of the peoples.

Stalin is now taking up the first Leninist perspective, and puts the imperialist cause of war and the struggle for markets in the foreground; but it is too late for someone who yesterday threw the full potential of the international movement onto the other perspective: the fight for the liberation from fascism and National Socialism. Today, the incompatibility of the two perspectives is

acknowledged; but why does one then continue to drive the (now shattered) movement on the path of liberal and petty-bourgeois progress thinking, of “war for ideals”?

Perhaps to have a politically easy game in the next war by presenting it as a battle between the capitalist ideal of the West and the socialist ideal of the East? To shoot themselves into the politicians’ stupid competition, in which each camp insists on smothering the other under the terrible accusation of “fascism”?

Now, the interesting thing about Josef Stalin’s text is that he replies to this with “no.”

Completely unimpressed by his historical responsibility to have destroyed Lenin’s theory on the inevitability of wars between the capitalist countries and on proletarian revolution as the only way out of World War II, and equally serene in the face of the even more serious responsibility to have broken with the only political orientation corresponding to Lenin’s theory by ordering the Communists, first in Germany and then in France, England and America, to make “Burgfrieden” with their own state and bourgeois government, the head of today’s Russia reprimands those comrades who believe in the necessity of an armed clash between the “socialist” and the “capitalist” world or demimonde. But instead of evading the prophecy of a war between capitalism and socialism with the worn-out ideology of pacifism, competition and the coexistence of the two worlds, he says that it is only “theoretically” correct, that “the contradictions between capitalism and socialism are stronger” now and in the future “than the contradictions among the capitalist countries.”

True Marxists must take seriously all possible predictions about the contradictions within the Atlantic group of states and the resurgence of autonomous and strong capitalisms in defeated countries such as Germany and Japan. But Stalin’s conclusion with regard to the next conflict is to be treated with caution, since he invokes the situation on the eve of the Second World War by analogy: “Consequently, the struggle of the capitalist countries for markets and their desire to crush their competitors proved in practice to be stronger than the contradictions between the capitalist camp and the socialist camp.”

What socialist camp? If, as we have shown in your own words, your “socialist” labelled camp produces export commodities at the to be maximally increased speed, is it not the same “struggle for markets” and “desire to crush competitors” (or not to be crushed, which amounts to the same thing)? Will you not and will you not have to join the war, as producers of commodities, which in the Marxist language means: as capitalists? The only difference between you Russians and the others is that the fully developed industrialized countries have long since left behind the alternative of “inner colonization” of surviving pre-commodity producing islands while you are still going through this process. The consequence of this can only be one thing: the western states will squeeze you out on the ground of market competition like a lemon (don’t forget, you have accepted the movement of commodities and money, and as long as you are at the level of competition, you also can only take the path of low costs, meagre wages and a mad rush to work for the Russian proletariat); because it will inevitably come to war and the others will have better “armament,” they will beat you militarily after they have done away with you economically.

So how can we proceed in order to prevent an American victory, which is also the greatest of all evils for us? Stalin’s formula is quite clever – but above all, it is best suited to keep the revolutionary proletariat in stunned condition and doing the greatest service to Atlantic imperialism. He avoids at all costs declaring the famous “holy war,” which would put him in a bad light to a world public that has been caught up in the entertaining discussion about the aggressor; he therefore backs out on an “economic determinism,” which in no way causes him to return to the ground of class struggle and class war (a return that is historically impossible anyways).

The Stalinist language is rather dubious: as Lenin said, the war is fought between the capitalist states. And what are we gonna do? Do we call, as he did, the workers of all countries on both fronts to the class war, to turn the guns around? Never again. We’ll repeat the same elegant manoeuvre we did in World War II. We are joining with one of the two coalitions, for example France and England against the USA. In this way, we are breaking the front line and the day will come when we will take on the “last Mohawk” no matter whether it is a former ally or not.

Such pills are administered to the last gullible proletarians in dark back rooms, as long as they have not yet been converted to conformism by even worse means.

War or Peace?

But, have many asked the supreme leader, if we now believe again in the inevitability of war, what will happen to the huge apparatus we have built for the peace campaign?

The answer reduces the possibility of a peace campaign to a meagre degree. It could “result in preventing a particular war, in its temporary postponement, in the resignation of a bellicose government” and its replacement by a peace-keeping government (is this likely to curb the appetite for markets, which has been presented as a decisive fact many times before?). But “the inevitability of wars” remains. “It is possible that in a definite conjuncture of circumstances the fight for peace” (a democratic movement, not a class movement) “will develop here or there into a fight for socialism.” And in this case, it is no longer a question of securing peace

(which is impossible), but of overthrowing capitalism. What will the tens of thousands of fools who believe in world peace and “Burgfrieden” say?

To eliminate the wars and their inevitability, that is Stalin’s final sentence, “it is necessary to abolish imperialism.”

Good. And how do we do that, how do we destroy imperialism?

Stalin: “In this respect, the present-day peace movement differs from the movement of the time of the First World War for the conversion of the imperialist war into civil war, since the latter movement went farther and pursued socialist aims.” Completely clear: Lenin’s slogan was the social civil war, i. e. the proletariat’s war against the bourgeoisie.

But you, however, have already left the Leninist way before World War II and instead practised national “collaboration” or “partisan war”; you have rejected the social war, defending one bourgeois and capitalist camp against another.

So we will be attacking imperialism – but when, in war or in peace? If one day imperialism and capitalism fall, will it be in times of peace or war? In peaceful times you say: Leave the USSR alone, and we will abide strictly by the laws – no talk of overthrowing capitalism. In times of war you say: the times of civil war are over, the situation is no longer that of 1914-18; the workers will have to coordinate their actions with our respective political and military alliances with this or that capitalist camp. That’s how, country after country, the class struggle gets smothered in mud.

Whatever nonsense the parliament and the press may say, big capital can easily understand that Stalin’s “document” is not a declaration of war, but a life insurance policy.

Jus primae noctis^[27]

As in his accountability reports, Stalin likes to talk about the great deeds of the Russian government on a technical and economic level. So now, too: one had to face a virgin ground, “in view of the absence in the country of any ready-made rudiments of a socialist economy, it had to create new, socialist forms of economy, “starting from scratch,” so to speak.” This “unprecedented” task, Stalin says, was “accomplished [...] with credit.”

Well, it’s true: you were facing a virgin soil. That was your fortune and the misfortune of the proletarian revolution outside Russia. A revolution – no matter which kind it may be in history – then storms forward with full force when it only has to do with the obstacles of a wild, merciless but untouched ground.

But when, in the years following the conquest of power in the vast tsarist empire, the delegates of the Red Proletariat of the whole world met in the Kremlin’s baroque gold-plated halls to set the guidelines for that revolution which was supposed to destroy the imperial fortresses of the Western bourgeoisies, something essential was said in vain, not even Lenin understood it^[28]. If, therefore, the balance sheet of the large dams and power stations, the balance sheet of the colonisation of the vast steppes, is concluded with honour, the balance sheet of the revolution in the capitalist West was not only concluded dishonourable, which would not be the worst, but with a defeat from which it would not recover for decades to come.

What has been said in vain: in the bourgeois world, the world of Christian parliamentary civilisation and production of commodities, the revolution faces a prostitute ground.

You let it contaminate itself and die of it.

But even from this dark experience IT will arise again.

Notes

1. Refers to Stalin: “Marxism and Problems of Linguistics,” 1950, Criticized in “The Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory” (I fattori di razza e nazione nella teoria marxista), Il programma comunista, No. 16-20, 1953.
2. Quod differtur, non aufertur (lat.): postponed is not cancelled.
3. Stalin: Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, 1952
4. Barbariccia: “curly beard,” one of the devil’s names in Dante’s “Divine Comedy”: “Hell,” 21st chant, where verse 139 says: “and he used his butt as a trumpet.”
5. The theoretical organ of the communist left in Italy has been called “Battaglia comunista” since 1945; after the split in 1951, the organ of the movement to which Amadeo Bordiga belonged was called “Il programma comunista.”
6. Confession: Bordiga means that the economic and social structure of Russia will force Russian politicians to admit (the present paper dates from 1952) that “socialism” in Russia is nothing more than capitalism, even if they do not formulate it explicitly.

7. All quotes marked with "Stalin" are taken from: "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR." 1952.
8. V.I. Lenin: "Karl Marx," 1914, Lenin's Collected Works, Moscow, 1974, Volume 21, pp. 43-91.
9. See among others: Filo 92, "In the Vortex of Capitalist Anarchy"; Battaglia comunista, no. 9, May 1952, where the Marx chapter: "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof" is taken as a basis.
10. The 19th Party Congress of the CPSU took place in October 1952 and coincided with the economic debate discussed here.
11. State industrialism here means that the state is the owner of the industry which it also manages and administers, while agriculture is hardly affected at all (except for the small part of the Soviets). For Lenin, state capitalism was the highest goal that the proletariat's dictatorship could set itself in anticipation of the international revolution. It was to serve as a lever for the transformation of agriculture, which remained at the level of small-scale and patriarchal natural production. The Stalinist counterrevolution maintained state leadership and property rights in industry (without excluding private forms of enterprise), but in agriculture, in the form of the collective farm, it fortified a mode of production that was even far below the state capitalist level.
12. See: Karl Marx, Capital Volume I, 1867, Chapter 6, p. 123.
13. Allusion to the closing sequence of each fairy tale from "Thousand and One Nights." Scheherazade is the narrator's name. Through her narrative, the clever Scheherezade captivates a king who intends to kill her. She spins the fairy tales from night to night, through 1001 nights, and achieves that life is given to her.
14. Malenkov (1902-88): Member of the Politburo. After Stalin's death, the prime minister was removed from his post in February 1955, after a failed "coup attempt" against Khrushchev in July 1957. He then became director of an electricity plant in Kazakhstan.
15. Stachanov movement: another attempt to increase labour productivity and establish the piecework wage. For Stalin, she prepared the "transition from socialism to communism." But soon enough, however, the Stachanovists ("heroes of labor") seemed to have a rather inhibiting effect on productivity, and so they were gradually "dismantled" as leading political figures. See also Trotsky: the Stachanov movement in "The Revolution Betrayed".
16. Artel: an old form of peasant, cooperative union of Tatar origin; it served Stalin as the basis of the collective farm.
17. The 26 years refer to the year 1925, when Zinoviev had given the Italian communists the slogan: "Long live freedom! In 1952 at the 19th Party Congress, Stalin said: "The flag of national independence and sovereignty was thrown overboard [by the bourgeoisie]. There is no doubt that you, the representatives of the communist and democratic parties, will have to lift this flag and carry it forward if you want to be patriots, if you want to become the leader of the nation. You are the only one who can pick them up".
18. Allusion to Bukharin and Bogdanov.
19. "As long ago as 1844 I stated that the above-mentioned balancing of useful effects and expenditure of labour on making decisions concerning production was all that would be left, in a communist society, of the politico-economic concept of value. (Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, p. 95) The scientific justification for this statement, however, as can be seen, was made possible only by Marx's Capital." – Friedrich Engels, Anti-Dühring, 1877
20. Lenin: Remarks on Nikolai Bukharin's "Economy of the Transformation Period," 1981.
21. In this context, Stalin puts the word "commodity" in quotation marks. He proposes to replace the term "commodity delivery" with "product exchange" and suggests that the "transition from socialism to communism" would mean narrowing the scope of circulation of commodities and broadening that of product exchange.
22. L'après-midi d' une faune: "The Afternoon of a Faun"; music by Debussy.
23. Laissez faire, laissez passer (French): "Laissez faire, laissez passer, le monde va de lui-même" ("Let it happen, let it pass, the world will go on on its own"), a statement by Vincent de Gournay (1712-59), attributed to a French economist. Applies as a buzzword of economic liberalism, as an invitation to the state power not to intervene in economic processes.
24. Kesselring: from 1941-45 commander-in-chief of the Wehrmacht in Italy and North Africa.
25. Contradictio in adjecto (lat.): Contradiction in itself.
26. Ehrenburg: Russian writer. Apologete of peaceful coexistence and the "thaw." Nenni: Secretary General of PSI. Otherwise see Ehrenburg.
27. Jus primae noctis (lat.): "Right to the first night"; the right of the feudal lord to the first night with the newlyweds of his serf.
28. Amadeo Bordiga refers to the discussions of the first Comintern congresses on tactics to be used in the capitalist countries, which are no longer "virgin" but rather overripe. The Italian left has emphasised the danger of an "elastic" tactic towards the social democratic parties, particularly with regard to the tactics of the political (non-union!) united front and a common workers government with these parties. The Left considered that the young Communist parties should not compromise themselves by acting in concert with social democratic or similar parties, while other delegates and the Bolsheviks argued that they should first gather all forces to "sift" at a later date.