Stalinists Falsify Marxism Anew

State of Teaching Marxism in the Soviet Union

By F. FOREST

World War II took a heavy toll of men and materials in the Soviet Union. Exacting intolerable sacrifices from the Russian proletariat in order to rebuild the devastated country, the Kremlin bureaucracy seeks through terror and persecution to maintain its power. It must do so without bringing down upon itself the wrath of the Russian masses. This is a constant nightmare to the bureaucracy. It is in desperate need of an ideology that will help keep the masses in submission. Hence it has been systematically seeking to falsify and undermine every tenet of Marxism, the theoretical weapon for revolutionary practice. The basis of this was laid long ago with Stalin's promulgation of the theory of "socialism in one country."

But until 1943, the year the Soviet press hailed as "the year of the great conversion to the conveyor-belt system," not even the totalitarian Stalinist bureaucracy dared lay hands openly on Marx's *Capital*. In that year, however, there was published in the country's chief theoretical journal an obscurely entitled article, "Some Questions of Teaching Political Economy." (*Under the Banner of Marxism*, Nos. 7-8, 1943. All quotations in the text for which no source is cited are taken from this article. The magazine has since ceased publication, but in 1944 this article was issued as a separate pamphlet under the title, *Political Economy in the Soviet Union*. International Publishers.) This article initiated a new cycle in the Stalinist revision and falsification of Marxism.

The article caused a sensation in the European and American press because, reversing the traditional Marxist conception that the law of value is in the last analysis the dominant economic law of capitalist society, it claimed that the law of value also functioned "under socialism." To support this new anti-Marxist theory, the author was driven inescapably to undermine the old foundation, viz., the structure and content of Marx's *Capital*. The article is unsigned, but it bears the stylistic imprint of A. Leontiev, one of the editors of *Under the Banner of Marxism*. This gains further confirmation with the publication of a new pamphlet by A. Leontiev, entitled *Marx's Capital*, which repeats, practically word for word, the attack on the structure of *Capital* contained in the article under discussion. The establishment of the authorship of the article is, however, an entirely incidental matter since the views expressed are not those of an individual author, but the viewpoint of the Kremlin bureaucracy, with Stalin at its head.

Leontiev asserts that Soviet teachers have erred in constructing their courses on political economy "as a simple

copy of the structure of *Capital*." This, according to Leontiev, (1) violated "the historical principle," and (2) was "harmful pedantry." Obviously, it was not the *teaching*, but the *political economy* taught, that was under attack here.

I. The Structure of Capital

1. *"The Historical Principle"*

To justify this latest assignment to Soviet teachers to violate the structure of Marx's *Capital*, the Kremlin theoretician elaborates the following thesis:

The sequence that Marx follows in his exposition of problems in *Capital* is a natural consequence of the fact that he was blazing new trails in a science in which his aim was to reconstruct the science of political economy. But it is wholly obvious that in studying the fundamentals of this science and particularly so in mastering an elementary course, it is impossible entirely to preserve a logical order: this would be harmful pedantry and opposed to the necessity of teaching political economy as a general historical science.

Presumably Marx wrote *Capital* as he did because *Marx* was just a trail-blazer, and not because *capitalism* was as it was and continues to be, a class society. Presumably Marx wrote *Capital* not as a *critique* of political economy but as a contribution to a "reconstructed" political economy.

Leontiev dares to base his conception of a political economy as a "*general*" historical science on a statement from Engels, to the effect that "in the *widest* sense" (my emphasis — F.F.) political economy is "the science of the laws which govern the production and exchange of the material means of livelihood in human society." Leontiev, however, has evaded the essence of the quotation on that very page which Engels aimed precisely against the Leontievs of his own day:

> Whoever wishes to bring the political economy of Patagonia under the same laws as those of modern England would, in so doing, obviously bring to light nothing but the most banal commonplaces. [Herr Eugen Duehring's Revolution in Science, Anti-Duehring) Chas. H. Kerr & Co., 1935, p. 148.]

In any case, Marx's *Capital* is not a study of political economy "in the widest sense." It is an analysis of the *capitalist* mode of production and *its* mode of thought. It is an analysis of no other system. Marx, in a single phrase, separated himself from all political economy by subtitling *Capital*, "A Critique of Political Economy." Marx demonstrated thereby his determination to destroy the very foundations of political economy—the capitalist mode of production. Leontiev's attempt to transform political economy into a "general historic science," on the other hand, compels him to place upon the proletarian revolutionist Marx the bourgeois task "to reconstruct the science of political economy."

2. *The Commodity*

Leontiev cannot but concede the indisputable fact that Marx begins his work with an analysis of a commodity. But, argues Leontiev, "if we teach political economy according to the historical principle, it is necessary to consider such categories as commodities and money not only in the section devoted to capitalism, but also in the preceding parts of the course." And, of course, if a commodity can be "considered" in courses dealing with pre-capitalist societies, why not for post-capitalist societies? In brief, by means of his newly-conditioned "historical principle," the Stalinist falsifier seeks to divest the commodity of what Engels called its "particular distinctness," and to transform it from a *class* phenomenon to a phenomenon common to all societies. Thereby Leontiev has once again enthroned the commodity and with it the fetishism whereby the relations between human beings "assume the fantastic form of relations between things." The relation between workers and capitalists can thus be made to appear as the mere exchange of one commodity—money, for another—labor power, and not as it really is—a social relation between classes.

Marx, on the other hand, by beginning his analysis of capitalist production with an analysis of what he called "the economic cell-form" of capitalist wealth, was able to bring out most clearly the fetishism inherent in the commodity:

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relations of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor. (Capital, Vol. I, p. 83.)

Marx proceeds, first, to reveal that the twofold character of the commodity—its use value and exchange value—arises from the nature of the human activity involved—abstract labor and concrete labor. This, writes Marx categorically, "is the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns." (*Ibid*, p. 48.) Then, with broad historic strokes, Marx traces the development of the commodity from the stage when it makes its first appearance—the surplus of primitive communes—to the highest stage, its "classic form," under capitalism. Thereby he makes abundantly clear that the law of value cannot apply until abstract labor has been developed. The labor process of capital, wherein surplus value is extracted, is, of course, the essence of capitalist production, as it is of Marx's work. But capitalist production and capitalist theory is based upon the *historical* transformation of labor into a commodity.

Therefore, when Leontiev says that "This *exposition* (the exposition of a commodity) serves him (Marx) as the necessary prerequisite for the discovery of the secret of surplus value, which is involved in the transformation of labor power into a commodity," he is turning Marx on his head. It was the transformation of labor power into a commodity and into abstract labor which made possible the production of surplus value. Marx's exposition is based upon this historic development. Not *vice versa*.

3. *History and Logic*

It is generally known that the structure of Marx's greatest work was not fixed from the beginning. From

the publication of the *Critique of Political Economy*, the first version of *Capital*, in 1859, to the French edition of *Capital* in 1875, Marx had many times, as he put it, "to turn everything around." Marx continued to work on *Capital* till his death and the fourth, the German edition, includes changes he made in 1883, but no major modifications were introduced in the first volume after the French edition. And the one thing that remained unchanged in all versions of *Capital* is this, that they all began with the analysis of the commodity.

Eight years after the death of Marx, Engels analyzed what Adoratsky called "that form of presentation which most clearly reflected the dialectical content of this, the chief work of Marxism." (*The Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, ed. by Adoratsky, International Publishers, 1934, p. 110.) Here is how Engels then explained the structure of *Capital*:

> If you just compare the development of the commodity into capital, in Marx, with the development from Being to Essence in Hegel, you will get quite a good parallel for the concrete development which results from the facts. (Ibid. p. 495.)

Thus, far from breaking with history, the structure of *Capital* is deeply rooted in history. In the dialectical materialism of Marx there is no contradiction between the historical and logical method of treatment. In the structure of *Capital* is reflected a historical development, a specific historic epoch. Capital is the product of historical evolution, and, whenever Marx viewed any aspect of capitalism as a logical abstraction, he constantly checked and rechecked and illustrated the corresponding economic category by the facts of its historical development.

Leontiev, on the other hand, introduces "the historical principle" only in order to rob the commodity of its class content and clothe it in "general historic" garb. The compelling force here is the need to falsify the Marxist analysis of the law of value. Since Marx's entire analysis is rooted in capitalist relations of production, the Stalinist theoretician would be unable to maintain that the law of value functions in the Soviet Union without "revising" the Kremlin's claim, that the Soviet Union is a land where socialism is "irrevocably established." He must either do this or else he must revise the concept that the law of value is dominant in capitalist society alone. There are good and sufficient reasons why the Stalinist hack preferred the latter course. But to accomplish this feat of distortion, Marx's analysis of a commodity had to be "revised," and with it the structure of *Capital*.

II. The Law of Value

1. *The Dual Character of Labor*

The break with the structure of Marx's *Capital* lays the theoretical groundwork for a complete revision of Marxist economic theory, but the new edifice still remains to be constructed. It is no simple matter to extend the operation of the law of value to a "socialist" society. So solid was the structure Marx had built to prove the opposite that no one—not even the all-powerful *Politburo* of the Russian Communist Party—could merely circumvent what Marx called his major original contribution: the analysis of the twofold character of labor. Nor could the Stalinist henchman, Leontiev, reconcile his admission that labor in the Soviet Union bears a dual character with the claim that all capitalist relations had been eradicated in the USSR. The central point of Marx's critique of political economy is contained precisely in Marx's exposure of its failure to see exploitation, although it had discovered that labor was the source of all value. Ricardo, Marx had written,

> . . .sees only the quantitative determination of exchange value, that is, that it is equal to a definite quantity of labor time; but he forgets the qualitative determination, that individual labor must by means of its alienation be presented in the form of abstract, universal, social labor. (Theories of Surplus Value, Rus. ed., Vol. II, 2, pp. 183-4.)

The qualitative determination of labor is the *exploitative* relation. By laying this bare, Marx revealed also how the law of value is, in reality, the law of surplus value. The Leontiev of the pre-1943 vintage, summed this up well enough when he wrote:

> The Marxist doctrine of surplus value is based, as we have seen, on this teaching of value. That is why it is important to keep the teaching of value free from all distortions because the theory of exploitation is built on it. (Political Economy, A Beginner's Course, International Publishers, 1935, p. 88.)

2. *Leontiev Discovers a New Duality*

Not even the Leontiev of 1943 can deny the exploitative nature of the dual character of labor. But he attempts to argue that whereas this is true "under capitalism," it does not hold "under socialism," where:

> . . .this dual character of labor is no longer linked with the contradiction between private and social labor which is characteristic of commodity production on the basis of private property. Under capitalism the right of the producer to property in the products of his labor is replaced, as a result of the force of the laws of capitalist production, by the right of the capitalist to appropriate the product of alien, unpaid labor. In socialist society, all labor useful to society is rewarded by society.

It is easy to see why Leontiev would like to hide Part I of *Capital* from the eyes of the Russian workers. He wishes to screen social relations behind the fetishism of commodities. It is thus that he "discovers" that, regardless of the dual character of labor, *all* labor "useful" to society is properly "rewarded." This quagmire of Stalinist falsifications becomes the basis for inventing a "duality" between "labor useful to society" as opposed to labor "useless to society."

It is clear that Leontiev acted as he did not because he "willed" it. As a servant of the Kremlin bureaucracy, fearful of the wrath of the Russian workers, he could not do as Marx did—leave the market and follow the worker into the factory. It was there that Marx saw that not only are the commodities the laborer produces alienated from him, but so is his very activity. This being so, it became the basis of Marx's original contribution to political economy:

the analysis of the dual character of labor, which arises in the sphere of production, not in the sphere of distribution. Leontiev, on the other hand, who has remained in the market not by accident, is now prepared to replace the duality between concrete and abstract labor by another: the "duality" between "labor useful to society" as opposed to labor "useless to society." The Stalinist hack tries to tell us that *because* "all labor useful to society is rewarded by society," it therefore follows that:

> Hence there is abolished that characteristic of commodity production by which labor spent on the production of useful objects may prove useless to society, labor which finds no social recognition because the commodity it produced remains unsold.

Leontiev's tortuous attempts to resolve the irresolvable contradiction between his admission that labor in the Soviet Union bears a dual character and his claim that all capitalist relations have been eradicated, has ended, of necessity, in his abandonment of the Marxist analysis of the dual character of labor.

3. *"Distribution According to Labor"*

The method by which Leontiev seeks to revise the Marxist analysis of the dual character of labor is the same method by which Stalin, as far back as 1930, sought to falsify the Marxian analysis of expanded reproduction. (*Cf.* Trotsky's "Stalin as a Theoretician." His new "revisionism," Leontiev clothes in a formula culled from the Stalinist Constitution of 1936: "*distribution according to labor.*" Leontiev apparently believes that by employing this phrase he has succeeded in translating the law of value into a function of socialism.

At the same time this Stalinist "theoretician" rejects the formula that has always stood in Marxist theory for socialism and the abrogation of the law of value: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Moreover, *Under the Banner of Marxism* also rejects as inapplicable to the land where socialism has been "irrevocably established" the Marxist formula applicable to countries "*just emerging from the womb of capitalism*:" payment according to "the natural measure of labor"—*time*. Finally, the author makes clear that the money which is the medium of payment for labor is not some scrip notes, but money as the measure of value: "labor continues to be the measure in economic life." Thus, by the time Leontiev has wound up the argument for the Stalinist "socialist principle" of "distribution according to labor," that formula has every outward appearance of payment of labor—as of any other commodity—at value, a basic manifestation of the dominance of the law of value under capitalism.

Leontiev's attempt to extricate himself from what logically flows from his own argumentation further deepens the self-contradictions in which he is immersed. Just as previously he tried to smooth his path toward breaking with the structure of *Capital* by defining political economy as a "general historic science," so now Leontiev tries to erect a bridge toward the Stalinist falsehood contained in the assertion that the law of value functions "under socialism." He begins with a broad generalization to the effect that "there can be no scientific knowledge if one recognizes no laws." He then goes on: "In reality it is an elementary truth that a society, whatever its form, develops in accordance with definite laws which are based on objective necessity. This objective necessity manifests itself differently under different forms of society." From this generalization Leontiev then leaps to the following anti-Marxist conclusion:

> Thus we see that there is no basis for considering that the law of value is abrogated in the socialist system of society. On the contrary, it functions under socialism, but it functions in a transformed manner. Under capitalism the law of value leads inevitably to the rise and development inevitably linked with the destruction of productive forces, with crises, with anarchy of production. Under socialism it acts as a law consciously applied by the Soviet state under conditions of the planned administration of the national economy, under the conditions of the development of an economy free from crises. . .Under the domination of private property in the means of production, operation of the law of value leads nievitably to the rise and development of capitalist exploitation; in a socialist society the rise of exploitation is blocked by the domination of the socialist property in the means of production.

Leontiev apparently believes that the words, "under socialism," suffice to clothe in socialist raiment the dominant economic law of capitalism.

4. *Theories of Value*

In his attempt to lift the theory of value out of its capitalist context and transform it into a "universal theory of value" Leontiev at one and the same time asserts that the law of value functions "under socialism" and also that it functioned in pre-capitalist societies. A basis for this is laid by Leontiev not only in his article, "Some Questions of Teaching Political Economy," but also in his pamphlet, *Marx's Capital*, where he tries to prove "the historical emergence of value in deep antiquity." The authorship of this new theory Leontiev modestly ascribes to Engels.

In the book, *Engels on Capital*, published in 1937, there is a little essay in which Engels develops a statement of Marx. This is to the effect that the lower the stage of civilization the closer do prices approximate values, the higher the stage, the more indirect the approximation. In that limited sense* of the relationship of value to price, Engels shows how effectively the law of value functioned in the pre-capitalist period. Leontiev is suddenly full of praise for Engels:

> Engels' article on the law of value and the rate of profit, besides being an important supplement to the third volume

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*And only in that limited sense since Marx had been most explicit in his expose of Adam Smith's error in considering that the law of value functioned "purest" under simple commodity production. Adam Smith fell into this error, explains Marx, "because he had abstracted [the law of value] from capitalistic production and precisely because of this it appears as if it were invalid." (Theories of Surplus Value, Rus. ed., Vol. III, 3, p. 55.)

of Capital, is of great value for the understanding of the economic theory of Marxism as a whole.

This "Marxism as a whole" the Leontiev of the pre-1943 vintage interpreted very differently, and precisely in his own introduction to this same essay of Engels:

> Whereas at the hands of the Social-Democratic theoreticians of the epoch of the Second International, the categories of value, money, surplus value, etc., have a fatal tendency to become transformed into disembodied abstractions inhabiting the sphere of exchange and far removed from the conditions of the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat, Engels shows the most intimate, indissoluble connection these categories have with the relation between classes in the process of material production, with the aggravation of class contradictions, with the inevitability of the proletarian revolution. (This introduction by Leontiev appears in the Russian edition only, O Kapitale Marksa, published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute under the supervision of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, 1937.)

Now the Stalinists were not the first to try to extend the operation of the law of value to "the socialist state of Marx." The bourgeois economist, Adolph Wagner, tried to do the same thing in 1883. In no uncertain terms Marx castigated "the presupposition that the theory of value developed for the explanation of bourgeois society, has validity for the 'socialist state of Marx'." Marx reiterated: "...in the *analysis* of value I had in view bourgeois relations and not the application of this theory of *value* to a 'socialist state'." (*Archives of Marx-Engels*, Rus. ed., Vol. V, p.59.)

This is the last writing we have from Marx's pen. Engels continued Marx's work, criticizing the then Marxist disciple Kautsky for treating value in a "Kantian manner":

> Value is a category characteristic only of commodity production, and just as it did not exist prior to commodity production, so it will disappear with the abolition of commodity production. (Collected Works of Marx-Engels, Rus. ed., Vol. XXVII, p. 386. No English translation is available.)

Precisely. No one could possibly attribute to Engels a view on value other than that held by Marx. In *Anti-Duehring*, written in collaboration with Marx, Engels argued that it would be sheer absurdity "to set up a society in which at last the producers control their products by the logical application of an economic category (value) which is the most comprehensive expression of the subjection of the producers by their own product." (*Op. cit.*, p.347)

The whole elaborate structure that the Stalinist henchman tries to erect crumbles under the impact of the heavy blows Marx and Engels dealt in their own day to all other theories of value.

"Of course it would be an absurd and scholastic approach," Leontiev states suddenly, "to presume that Marx and Engels could foresee and foretell the concrete, practical way to employ the law of value in the interests of socialism." It could have been foreseen "*neither by Marx nor even by Lenin.*" (My emphasis — F.F.)

Only "the genius of Stalin," continues the Stalinist hireling, could work out the application of the law of value to a "socialist society." This, we are told bombastically, opens a new stage of "Marxist-Leninist economics":

> The assertions of Stalin on the fate of economic categories of capitalism under conditions of socialist society are theoretic generalizations from the magnificent experience of socialist construction in the USSR and signify a new stage in development of the science of Marxist-Leninist economics. These statements are among the most important principles of the political economy of socialism created by Comrade Stalin.

The only truth in this statement is that "the political economy of socialism" is wholly an invention of Stalin, and his corrupt henchmen.

III. Dialectical Philosophy, Kremlin Style

1. *Soviet Reality*

Not the niceties of pedagogy but the pressing needs of the Soviet economy made necessary the revision of the law of value in the Marxist sense. Not by accident the crowning achievement of this revision came with the promulgation of the Fourth Five-Year Plan, which was openly based on "the use of the law of value."

To "make use of the law of value" meant the conscious subordination to the force of this law. How seriously this task was executed by the Soviet intelligentsia can be seen from a lecture on "The Time Factor in the Matter of Capital Investment" that Academician Strumilin delivered to the learned council of the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. If "a high rate of socialist accumulation" is to be achieved, states Strumilin, it will be necessary to consider not merely "prime cost" but "*full* cost":

> In order to change from "prime cost" to full cost of the projected articles and their production, it is necessary therefore first of all to add to the paid share of labor that of its share which is reserved as a matter of planned accumulation. (Bulletin of the Institute of Economics, Academy of the USSR, No. 3, 1946. Emphasis in original.)

With this as a basis, Strumilin proceeds to calculate the relationship of dead to living labor, of capital investment to rate of profit, thus achieving statistical measurement for calculating the rate of "socialist accumulation" which could be the envy of any bourgeois economist.

Ever since the outbreak of World War II the Kremlin bureaucracy has tried to raise *per capita* production through the institution of what it has dared to call "socialist emulation." This new competition between *factories* has supplemented Stakhanovism, or competition between *individual* workers. The totalitarian bureaucracy is attempting to make the maximum speed of production of an individual Stakhanovite into the norm for *all* workers, factory by factory. This has only deepened the conflict between the Stalinist regime and the Russian masses. The need arose for a new ideology to discipline the Russian proletariat. The attempt to undermine and falsify every tenet of Marxism was the result.

2. *The New Phase of Falsifications*

The new phase of falsifications gained a momentum of its own and could not stop half-way. The very logic of

the break with the structure of *Capital* compelled the falsification of its content as well. The next inevitable stage is to distort the significance of Marx's immortal work. It was no longer to be considered the basic work of *Marxism*, but only of *Marx;* here "the historical principle" was applied to show that *Capital* was the greatest work *up to* Lenin and Stalin." (*About the Preliminary Variant of Marx's Capital*, p. 4. My emphasis—F.F.) This new pamphlet by Leontiev was published in Russian by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1946, one year after the appearance of Leontiev's pamphlet, *Marx's Capital*, and three years after the publication of "Some Questions of Teaching Political Economy." But the sequence did not reach its culminating point until the revision had been extended to the philosophy of Marxism itself. Once the Stalinist bureaucracy laid its brutal hands on *Capital*, it of necessity had to intensify its falsifications of dialectical materialism itself.

If a "revision" of Marxist analysis of the law of value was made imperative by the functioning of the Soviet "socialist" economy, the arbitrariness of bureaucratic planning demanded as imperatively the discovery of a "new dialectical law." There was no way out of the impasse except through the endowment of "criticism and self-criticism" with supernatural powers. This was the compelling reason why the Secretary of the Central Committee donned the mantle of philosopher, and no Soviet philosopher missed the significance of Zhdanov's appearance at their conference in June 1947.

3. *"A New Dialectical Law"*

Zhdanov spoke with the authority of the *Polburo* when he assigned the "philosophic workers" their new task. This consisted in asking them to find nothing less miraculous than "a new dialectical law," one that was "free of antagonisms." The key passage in Zhdanov's speech is worth quoting in full:

> In our Soviet society where antagonistic classes have been liquidated, the struggle between the old and the new, consequently, the development from the lower to the higher, takes place, not in the form of a struggle of antagonistic classes and cataclysms, as it does under capitalism, but in the form of criticism and self-criticism, which is the genuine motive force of our development, the powerful instrument in the hands of the party. This is without doubt a new form of movement, a new type of development, a new dialectical law. (Published in Russian in Questions of Philosophy, No. 1, 1947; also in Bolshevik, No. 16, Aug. 30, 1947. English translation is available in the April 1948 issue of Political Affairs.)

With the demand for a theory of value that was not at the same time a theory of surplus value, the Stalinists tried to divest the labor theory of value of its class content. With the demand for a new dialectical law free of contradictions, they seek to make, not the masses, but the totalitarian bureaucracy ("the critics"), the driving force of history. Idealism has thus been enthroned in the Kremlin, and scientific socialism reduced to the petty-bourgeois socialism of a Proudhon. Perhaps the best way to describe the vulgar thinking of the Stalinist bureaucracy is to quote what Marx said of Proudhon's way of thinking a full century ago:

> In place of the great historic movement arising from the conflict between the productive forces already acquired by men and their social relations, which no longer correspond to these productive forces;. . .in place of practical and violent action of the masses by which alone these conflicts can be resolved — in place of this vast prolonged and complicated movement, Monsieur Proudhon supplies the evacuating motion of his own head. (Marx-Engels Correspondence, p. 16.)

4. *Soviet Philosophy and Soviet Reality*

The destruction of the warp and woof of historical materialism was made necessary by the very depth of the Soviet crisis. At the very time of Zhdanov's appearance among the learned philosophers, there was published in the Soviet Union a new book by the Chairman of the State Planning Commission, Voznessensky, entitled *The War Economy of the USSR during the Period of the Patriotic War.*

This work is not merely a description of the Soviet war economy, but it is the legal code promulgated by the Stalinist bureaucracy for the development of the post-war economy. It is at the same time an unconscious admission that the bureaucracy has failed to raise the productivity of labor to the level needed "to catch up with" capitalism, let alone achieve the transition to "communism."

The bureaucracy is attempting to resolve the deepening contradictions of the Soviet economy in its usual manner—through bureaucratic stifling of mass initiative. But this is a double-edged sword. It is true that it is two decades now since the Russian workers have had any control over the Plan. But while this has increased the bureaucracy's stranglehold of the worker, it has also deprived the bureaucracy of any of the practical experience of the workers at the point of production. The Plan has long been executed without the benefit of the old Workers Conflict Commission, abolished in 1940, but in recent times all previous limits of arbitrariness have been surpassed. The top Planning Commission sets up the plan, and the workers have nothing to do but follow orders. But the complete divorce between the masses and Stalinist state represented by this stage of bureaucratic planning means also the complete loss of objectivity for the planners, and the Soviet economy keeps staggering from one crisis to another. At the same time purges continue in every sphere: economic, political, philosophic, literary, scientific, pedagogic and artistic.

The cycle of falsification begun in 1943 has reached its culminating point. Marx used to say of classical political economy: for it there *was* history, but there is no history any longer. Of the Soviet bureaucracy it may be said: for it there *once was* revolution, but now there is only "criticism and self-criticism." This criticism and self-criticism manifest themselves as purges, more purges, and still more purges. In this sense, the theoretical thinking of the Stalinist bureaucracy has been reduced to what Trotsky once called "the empiricism of a machine gun."

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