

The Base of Iceberg
Socialism in Russia and China
Part I

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Judging events based on their appearances alone, and doing so full of stubborn conviction, might serve armchair politicians well. One way or another, they can convince people near to them of their beliefs. However, from the perspective of science, such an approach is utterly worthless, above all when it comes to theory!

Following the counter-revolutions of 1989-1991, such armchair politicians were a dime a dozen in the socialist movement. While imprisoned as a young man, the author of this study was shocked to see firsthand how people who claimed to be leaders of the movement approached the Soviet Union and eastern Europe as armchair politicians in the fullest sense of the term. Devoid of any theoretical perspective, disciplined scientific inquiry was also foreign to them. What an insult to Marxism were these “great men” who did no research and simply explained things according to conventional wisdom.

Marx demonstrates how appearances and common sense are invariably contradicted by scientific fact. Conventional wisdom is the “wisdom” of dominant forms of thought in any given conditions. The forms of thought that dominate is materially the thought of dominant classes. Scientific endeavors always swim against the current. Above all, it must vehemently wage war on static thought, taking appearances for granted, and habit.

When viewed up close and examined in depth, every phenomenon and historical event has an objective content that contradicts conventional wisdom and its superficial essence. This is why every

serious scientific study demonstrates that what seems reasonable based on appearances and true according to conventional wisdom are in fact false.

In the book you now hold in your hands, Berdan has set out to undertake precisely this type of research. He declares war on what is taken for granted and widely accepted about one of the most challenging topics. It should come as no surprise that those who understand socialism not as a social system, but as a superstructure, a mere form of political power assert that socialism in the Soviet Union was dead and buried decades ago. According to them, the capitalist counter-revolution that seized power hijacked Russia to capitalist harbors. Indeed, some even assert that it is obvious Russia has become an imperialist nation. And further yet, there are those who say that the matter was done and dusted with the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

They think it is madness speak of a socialist base in a climate Boozer Yeltsin ran his country into the ground, everything was sold or privatized and the modes of production were destroyed. The armchair politicians mentioned above and speak mockingly of "brothel socialism." The image fits their words. But science and a scientific approach has something else to tell us. Socialism isn't a shirt you put on. Sciences teaches us that it's a social system rooted in a base, material forces of production and the organization of labor. It explains that despite the turmoil at the level of superstructure, despite the rampant destruction, socialism remained resilient and forged its own path. It shows us how those who set about changing the route from socialism to capitalism had to submit to this material base independent of their own intentions and will (it is impossible for us to know the intentions of others, and beyond a very limited scope, it is irrelevant).

That is why Berdan begins his work with theoretical fundamentals. He provides the reader a

firm floor on which to put their feet. However following this exposition of the scientific perspective, he turns to the course of events. In particular, he sets out for us how the socialist base that has withstood the awesome storm of the past decades, contradicting what we have been on that we have been expected to take for granted over the past 35 years. He demonstrates that the phenomena we encounter in Russia today stand in direct opposition to conventional wisdom and what is generally accepted.

In this first volume of Berdan's work, he examines the development of socialism and the socialist base and its position in present conditions in Russia. In the second volume, which is being prepared for publication, he turns to China. Because this first volume on Russia also contains the theoretical basis, the first volume comprises a greater portion of the work. It provides the reader invaluable information to understand contemporary Russia and the Kremlin's confrontation with the imperialist world.

INTRODUCTION

Publishers always recommend telling a story to get readers interested in a book, particularly if it is full of long and boring theoretical debates with historical analysis of the distant past to boot. Following their advice, we began the book *The End of Capitalism* with the riveting story of the Tower of Babel. Although we don't know whether including the story achieved its intended goal, it seems that it would be a good idea to begin this work on Russia and China by again following our publisher's advice and telling a different story. This time, we've chosen a personal anecdote instead of a mythological tale. It's a memory old guns over the age of fifty (the true target audience of this work) will likely share.

Let us return to that unfortunate year of 1991...

On a sweltering August morning, Ankara was seized by an unaccustomed wave of excitement. The street taken where those on the left-wing and socialist scene mingled and socialized was buzzing with cheerful, excited, and lively groups clustered about. Who wasn't part of this gathering that day! One hardly ever saw Trotskyites with Maoists and Hoxhaists, hardened revolutionaries and bleeding-heart reformists side by side. The reason for the excitement was news that had arrived from Moscow just that morning. It was not mere news, but came out of the blue, a bolt of lightning that struck all the world's news agencies. The Soyuz Group had carried out their August action. The disintegration of the USSR had come to a halt and the promised to step in to protect socialism. For those who carried not the flame, but the sparks, fading embers of socialism, it was the best news in the two years since the Berlin Wall had been torn down in 1989. And for this reason, this abnormal mental and intellectual state created unity on the streets of Ankara. It was impossible for those experiencing that moment not to sense the extraordinary nature of the situation. This was because no matter how

many people had been thrown to different extremes and locked in a stranglehold with each other while debating over different points of reference just yesterday, they were all now bound by their beating hearts to the news coming from Moscow. Their differences had been erased. It was as if the sun was brighter, the colors more dazzling, and the laughter of friendship and joy that rang out filled with more hope and confidence.

This atmosphere lasted for a couple of days. And then the sun suddenly lost its brightness, colors faded, laughter vanished. The Soyuz group scattered and the counter-revolution planted its victorious banners on Moscow's towers. Deep melancholy drove off joy. And then everyone retreated to their previous positions, defending the idea that the defeat they had suffered actually justified their own position. Some, like Trotskyites who were everywhere in Ankara, began to holler that socialism in one country had never been possible and that the USSR had never even experienced true socialism. Maoists took great pleasure in asserting that the USSR had now openly revealed the road towards capitalism it had embarked upon in 1956. Hoxhaists ecstatically greeted the collapse of contemporary revisionism. But most excited of all were those who had chosen the path of reformism. At last they were no longer bound to socialism and the opportunities to collaborate with the bourgeoisie, who they had sought this whole time, multiplied. The revolutionaries, who had always felt a certain degree of loyalty to the USSR, were overcome with astonishment, silence, and melancholy. Having abandoned its cheerful, buzzing atmosphere, everyone had taken shelter under their own umbrellas against the torrent of propaganda pouring down from the dark clouds of counter-revolution.

Looking back on those incredibly joyful and exciting days that reigned over Ankara for a few days, it was impossible not to see that the vast majority of people with a left-wing/socialist orientation in these lands, despite the variety of mental baggage and defense mechanisms they carried with them, were essentially wholeheartedly devot-

ed to the cause of socialism. **Even if they were singing in different languages, it was the same tune.** Moscow was the apple of our eye, the first heartache for all of us. The Soyuz Group that had carried out the intervention in August had succeeded in bringing together, if only for a few days, those who were wholeheartedly devoted to socialism, united by its very name.

Thirty-four years have passed since these memories took place.

And now, this work on Russia and China intends to rekindle the same joy, excitement, and unwavering confidence in socialism. However this time around it will be through reason, rather than pathos. The difficulty of creating unified understanding about the history of socialism we refer to here is undeniable. This sort of authority was only ever found in the united organizations of the global communist movement such as the COMINTERN. This book can take the first step toward revealing the truth. The main factor that forces us all to remain stuck in defensive positions under separate umbrellas is a deluge of lies and distortions created by the immense collective effort of the world bourgeoisie. Over the last 35 years, whether it be Russia or China, 35 years, whether it was Russia or China, newspapers, television, books, etc., have always shown humanity only the tip of the iceberg. But the millions of signs that were hung on the iceberg all convey the same ideas. "Following the fall of the Soviet Union, not a single stone remained standing. Even the shadow of socialism was erased. As for China, it is now a greenhouse for brutal capitalist exploitation."

We invite the reader to see beneath the surface of the iceberg, filled with lies and distortions. To do so, it will be necessary to dive into icy waters woven with lengthy theoretical explanations and debates, but beneath the iceberg, two striking realities await the reader:

In contemporary Russia, socialism has both objective and subjective power and every move the Putin government makes is shaped by their capacity to realize that they can shape it as they please with brute violence.

China is not a capitalist heaven. It is the space where purgatory becomes hell for capitalists. Since the 1970s, socialism has only become stronger; more concrete and enduring.

Especially for people whose minds have been deeply impacted by the torrent of black propaganda the global bourgeois has spewed for the past 35 years, it is not difficult to imagine that this truth beneath the iceberg is both astonishing and equally hopeful. Nevertheless, there are also those in this part of the world who know how to shield themselves from such propaganda. They have said, even on the day of the Soviet Union's dissolution, that socialism will emerge victorious. This assertion is based on the history of Marxism and the broadest analyses of society and political power. Leninists responded to the greatest disaster of the 20th century, the collapse of the socialist world, with these guiding theoretical principles and have continued on their path with the confidence that these theoretical analyses will ultimately be validated. Neither Leninists nor others interested in the subject have the time to detail and evaluate the facts that accumulated during the process. As long as the civil war that erupted on these lands was running its course, it was necessary to avoid any event that presented a blurred image. Under those conditions, we continued on the path of civil war. The theoretical depth of the article "Socialism will Triumph" provided us clarity; the rest was unimportant, and history would inevitably prove the theory correct.¹ And indeed, the theory has successfully stood the test of history.

The fact that the condition of civil war determined this understanding of living socialism is one of the most striking truths of our region. The fact that this civil war that coincided with the retreat of socialism provided a convent excuse to turn away from the revolutionary duty the conflict presented. "Even the USSR abandoned socialism," they said. "What is left that's worth dying for?" The fact that this striking situation will continue in all its vi-

1 Cf. "Devrimci Emek" ["Revolutionary Labor"], *Mücadele Birliği* no. 6
https://mucadelebirligi24.net/pdf/d_emek/006.pdf

tality even in 2025 only proves the enduring character of the truth. Today, excuses for abandoning the primacy of the national liberation movement and revolutionary duties are based on the same fables. Nevertheless, **this study is belated**. The facts of the astonishing reality beneath the tip of the iceberg were constantly accumulating, even while many books on the subject missed the fundamental truth. They circulated, were quickly read, and set aside. Even the author of this work could write the following in a recent letter, “Capitalism wrought destruction beyond even what we foresaw in 1991 in the article ‘Socialism will Triumph’.” (The purpose of including an extremely personal confession in the Introduction is to give credit to the true inspirations behind this work.) Because once the preconception that capitalism is now fully dominant in Russia has taken root in the mind, one tends to explain away the abundance of evidence to the contrary by stating it’s merely a question of “preserving a legacy.” But how could a “legacy” keep reappearing, multiplying each time, when most of the generation that carried its traces had passed away over the last 35 years? There had to be a foundation so that new generations in Russia could inherit the traces of this legacy. As can be seen, this question, which dispels prejudice, could only come to the fore in a time frame that spans over 35 years, more than a generation. The war between Russian and Ukraine shook the very foundations of all the prejudices heaped atop the iceberg. Even before the war had begun, the editors of *Unified Struggle [Mücadele Birliǵı]* warned those who looked upon the conflict as a clash between imperialists, continually emphasizing Russia’s particularity. Even before grasping the full picture, living intuition was fulfilling its revolutionary duty, pointing to the fact that beneath the tip of the iceberg lay not only something unique, but also a striking truth. The author of this work, abandoning the preconceptions mentioned in the letter above and starting from the point indicated by the editors’ intuition and theoretical perspective, arrived at the concrete reality of the foundation, perceived as a legacy, which had been kept out of sight until now: Russia’s “Raion System.”

This is the important story, not Russia's late-comer oligarchs. Even the world's most entrenched and powerful financial-oligarchy groups broke their teeth on the steely raions . . .

After revealing the book's main theme regarding Russia right at the beginning, we recommend that the reader resist the urge to rush through the sections dealing with the raions. It is essential in order to fully understand how raions could become the indestructible core of socialism. It will be necessary to summarize the entire experience of socialism in the USSR beginning with the New Economic Policy (NEP) era. The extensive rehearsal of the NEP period and debates have an added significance, particularly for being able to evaluate contemporary China. The following period is that in which the complete triumph of socialism is located, continuing through to its maturation. It presents a somewhat detailed snapshot of the technical and political foundations of industrialization in a vast country, shedding light on the step-by-step development of the raions. These are probably the most difficult parts of the work to read. Nevertheless, this section is not merely a purely technical account of how the foundations of industrialization were laid; it is the story of the comprehensive development of labor, the most important productive force. The significance of this story lies not only in illuminating the permanence and resilience of the raion factories, but also in enabling a corresponding theoretical perspective.

This theoretical insight is described as the “**formal subsumption of labor**” and the “**real subsumption of labor**” in reference to Marx. This is the dynamic that drives evolution of socialism from its “total victory” to a mature form of socialism.

Reading about the history and present of the raions may be interesting to many readers, but to grasp that they embody the objective and subjective forces of socialism that persist in today's world, one must set aside other prejudices and entrenched misconceptions. For this reason, the extended discussion of the understanding of socialism articulated in Marx and Engels' key works in the section

on utopian socialism and the following pages should not be understood exclusively as an effort to remind readers of basics. This section is an attempt to smash today's persistent prejudices. What kind of prejudices are we talking about? The ideas that most of us have established in our literature as "simple fundamental truths," of course. The first and most indisputable one is that a counter-revolution took place in the USSR and that with it, socialism ceased to exist and that whatever remained was a remnant of it. What is wrong here? What part of a camel isn't curved? For one thing, the view that reduces socialism to a matrix of governance transforms socialism into an "exterior phenomenon," an article of clothing that the laboring masses can put on and take off. This view ultimately rests on the floor of the utopian understanding of socialism. Utopians see the masses as lacking the qualities and development needed to save themselves, so they sought salvation not in the actual conditions of this exploited class, but in the "triumph of reason." The transition of the ruling power to counter-revolution, which ended socialism, also puts "the defeat of reason" at the forefront. However, what is being discussed is 70 years of socialism. It is labor that has been refined by experience, gaining new capacities and ultimately enabling the establishment of "real sovereignty" over production. The book describes how, in order to maintain the position and capacity that such labor achieved in Russia, resistance of epic took place following the 1990s and it ultimately managed to keep its protective shield intact.

It also addresses another fallacy, that of "actually existing socialism." To say that what was destroyed was sub-optimal, and that if it had not been so it would not be destroyed, is a tautology that forecloses debate. This reasoning has two terrible flaws. First, it assumes that being destroyed means something is not ideal, and that if it were ideal it would not be destroyed. **The former is the search for an ideal form of socialism and represents nothing other than regressing from scientific socialism to the level of utopian socialism.** In fact, it is plain in Marx and Engels' foundational works that, aside from a few

fundamental principles about the kind of socialism that will be established, they don't resort to any concepts that could be idealized. Marx and Engels were certain socialism would materialize from the experience of the masses. Lenin emphasized that all socialist experiments would be one-sided and far from ideal.

In short, every socialist experiment is essentially real, the scientific understanding of socialism ensure it.

The more serious error in reasoning is that it is a "renewal of faith" statement made from a defensive position. Over the past 30 years, those who have pursued the question of why the socialist movement has not been able to accumulate power as it did in the past have generally reached the same conclusion: Socialist don't offer an alternative to the capitalist system. How should they? Labeling it "actually existing" consigns socialism to the dustbin of history. Replacing it with an "ideal," has buried the advantage of being armed with ideas supported by the facts of contemporary history. As is the case worldwide, the confidence of revolutionaries in this part of the world is rooted in a concrete reality drawn from contemporary history. Once that support is buried, you can deceive the working masses as much as you want with propaganda about "ideal socialism." They will sniff out the lack of confidence in this propaganda, the ideal and abstract references that don't go beyond atoning for one's sins. The story of the failure of propaganda over the last 30 years is based on this landscape.

An idea that does not draw strength and support from the facts of contemporary history can neither penetrate the consciousness nor the hearts of the millions, nor give its bearers natural self-confidence.

The station a scientific study reaches almost always has two names. It extends forward, anticipating the future and reaches back to re-evaluate the past from a different perspective. **Discovering that the raions are the subjective and objective socialist core of Russia today leads to a number of new insights about the past.**

Those who are familiar with the socialist debates af-

ter 1991 will remember. Those who sought an explanation for the collapse found their answers in the internal decay of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), in the betrayal of its leaders, or in the apolitical, obedient attitude of workers who enjoyed the fruits of socialism but sank into silence at the most critical moment. **The book in your hands is filled with enough data to prove how empty these answers are.** Those seeking much deeper answers to the collapse could not avoid attributing all the blame to the Kosigin-Liberman reforms of the 1960s. Many of them sought to lend themselves an air of respectability by alluding to Ernesto Che Guevara. Due to the clear good intentions behind this endeavor and, of course, our high regard for Che's critiques, we have devoted significant space in our examination of the history of socialism in the USSR to the Kosigin-Liberman reforms. Although most of these debates have now been forgotten, putting the stones of the past in their rightful place will strengthen our perspective on the present.

Over the last 30 years, a generation that is distrustful of living socialism has emerged. The sole cause of this mistrust was not the visible face of the iceberg disfigured by the bourgeoisie's hatchet job. Theory, pulled and stretched from every corner in a panicked attempt to respond to the collapse, had turned into a contested jumble.

Those joyful days in August 1991, were the last time that trust in socialism encompassed the entire socialist camp. What followed was turmoil, because the touchstone of socialism no longer existed. If debates about socialism are to lead anywhere, there needs to be a yardstick. All turmoil sows insecurity and feeds off of it.

Trust in socialism grows by standing on its essential foundation. If this book can bring together the first pieces of criteria to see what is essential—the truths beneath the surface—then it will have achieved its purpose.

Below the stormy surface, the iceberg shines with faith in living socialism.

Setenay Berdan

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1.1

SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM IN MARX AND ENGELS

Socialism ceased to be an ideal, a pursuit, and became a practical reality beginning with the October Revolution of 1917. Socialism is etched in humanity's historical memory as a tremendous leap forward and a brilliant achievement (though these aspects were overshadowed by a spiral of major setbacks that, at least for a period of time, prevented it from being remembered and seen) and has more than a century of experience. This century stands alone, yet it is rich with inspiration for humanity's great and ultimate salvation in every era. This century-long history is filled with stories of the communities that created socialism, passing that great test. To what does socialism owe its resilience and longevity, spreading to one-third of the world for at least half of this great century? What is the reason for its enduring appeal? Is it due to those who tenaciously and stubbornly struggled for socialism? Certainly not. More than a worldview, socialism, the socioeconomic order of one-third of existing societies, owes its permanence and persistence to being scientific, **which begets necessity and inevitability**. Marx and Engels asserted their own program of scientific socialism against utopian socialism, which had significant cache amongst working class organizations in their time.¹ Utopian socialism has the polemics it entered into with Marxism to thank for the fact that it is still

¹ In *Anti-Dühring* the term "modern socialism" is used. Three sections of this book were published in French as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (*Socialisme utopique et Socialisme scientifique*) at the request of Paul Lafargue. From then on, the concept became "scientific socialism."

known today, despite the fact that it had already been vanquished by the later in the mid-19th century. It will be discussed in this work that evaluates the extremely fruitful socialist experiments that left their mark on the 20th and 21st centuries, and readers should not hold this against us. As will be seen in this study, utopian socialism has an objective, historical, and social foundation; it did not arise in a vacuum. And despite the centuries that have passed, it reappears in environments with similar conditions. The fact that it is utopian does not prevent it from being accepted among workers and the poor when conditions are right, just as it did not prevent it from being defeated by the scientific socialism of Marxism. Now the purpose of examining these outdated views can be summarized as follows: in cases where socialist experiments sometimes mimic utopian socialist ideas to a surprising degree, we will find clues pointing not to the agents of these views, but to the objective conditions that pave the way for them. Of the many elements that differentiate scientific socialism from its utopian versions, we assert that three points are especially significant:

Materialism: A new society should be sought not in ideals of immortality or celestial ones, nor in the pursuit of justice and morality, in millennial legends of salvation, but in the material forces within the existing society.

Historicity: New elements are the result of a specific social process, arising from the necessity of internal contradictions as they develop.

Class Perspective: Neither do they emerge guided by the bearers of rational thought, its sages and their teachings, but by the only class capable of attempting to institute a new social order and capable of doing so: the proletariat born of modern industry and supported by its practical struggle.

THE UTOPIANS AND THE TRIUMPH OF REASON

Anti-Dühring explains how utopian socialism emerged. The “triumph of reason” promised by the great French Revolution of 1789 gave way to a great disappointment; institutions boasting in the name of the revolution did not go beyond deceptive caricatures. Nevertheless, the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was still only in its nascent stage. Moreover, France did not yet have large-scale industry, and the proletariat was still among the “have-nots,” not yet in a position to engage in independent political action. As Engels explains, “The proletariat, which then for the first time evolved itself from these propertyless masses as the nucleus of a new class, as yet quite incapable of independent political action, appeared as an oppressed, suffering estate, to whom, in its incapacity to help itself, help could, at best, be brought in from without or down from above.”² As a result, classes mature only to the same extent as capitalism, a fact which finds an echo in a similarly immature theory.

This means we should not be surprised if, on occasion, we confront the objective conditions that produced utopian socialism in the socialist experiments of the 20th century. Caught up in the tempest of socialism in this century were societies far from heavy and modern industry. These societies were therefore not tested by the sharp lines of the contradictions in economic relations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. As a result, when they embraced the banner of socialism in the name of justice alone, to free themselves from obsolete, irrational institutions, or for national liberation, they would find an echo of the same “immature theory.”

These utopians, lacking the material elements to resolve the anomalies that appeared before them

² Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, MECW vol. 25, 245-46

Hereafter cited parenthetically as AD

as “contrary to the triumph of reason,” could only propose solutions based on reason.

“It was necessary, then, to discover a new and more perfect system of social order and to impose this upon society from without by propaganda, and, wherever it was possible, by the example of model experiments. These new social systems were foredoomed as utopian; the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure fantasies” (AD 246).

These two pronounced aspects of utopian socialism: propaganda and model experiments and the more it addresses detail, the more it becomes immersed in fantasy, a characteristic that reveals itself whenever the solution has not yet become apparent within economic relations. Scientific socialism doesn’t do without propaganda and model experiments, like utopian socialism. In particular, scientific socialism must demonstrate the superiority of the new society to small producer rural communities outside the economic relations of modern industry, proving it to these communities through examples from without.

Anti-Dühring, takes the example of the utopian socialist trio of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Robert Owen, marked by their intuition and genius.

Saint-Simon was young when the great French Revolution erupted, and he witnessed how the haute bourgeoisie, which quickly took control of the revolution, became a privileged class through speculation on the lands seized by the revolution and the goods sold to the army. The situation took the form of an opposition between “workers” and “idlers” in his mind. According to Saint-Simon, the working class included not only laborers, but also factory owners, bankers, and merchants. They produced society’s wealth, while the large bourgeois speculators, who belonged to the idle class, plundered this wealth. They produced society’s wealth, while the haute bourgeoisie speculators, who belonged to the

idle class, plundered this wealth. Therefore, the new society to be established would rely on a vanguard of “science and industry,” which would guide these masses, who did not yet have the ability to govern themselves, with the aim of altering the fate of the most populous and poorest class. The bourgeoisie, as a kind of public official, would be able to gain a certain economic advantage over the workers through this position.

Bankers held a very special place in Saint-Simon’s vision. Only they could bring social production to the desired level of efficiency through a rational credit system. This design was perfectly suited to an era when the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was still in its infancy. Even as a utopian socialist, Saint-Simon defined changing the fate of the poor as his most important task. However, he did not trust in their ability to govern or save themselves. Utopian though he was, Saint-Simon, with his socialist identity, still viewed changing the fate of the poor as his most important task. However, he did not trust their ability to govern or liberate themselves. Moreover, this fate was still overly dependent on modern social production, which needed to develop through industrialists and bankers in his view. Nevertheless, to prevent these groups, like the idle class, from prioritizing their own privileges, he establishes a heavenly bond through “new Christianity,” a model of technocratic governance in today’s terms. He trusted that the bourgeoisie would become a kind of public servant, trusted members of society. This is significant because, when considering the Chinese Communist Party’s claim that it subjected the bourgeoisie to a “socialist transformation,” acting under somewhat similar conditions and again with similar political relations and concerns, it will be necessary to recall Saint-Simon once more.

Fourier’s utopianism, however, is based on the exuberant flood of ideas awakened by the

revolution. Like Saint-Simon, Fourier also points to the abyss between the promises and the results of the revolution, a depth that cannot be covered by any rosy narrative. The depth itself carries Fourier to the dialectic, which he uses with at least as much skill as Hegel. With this understanding, he takes his critique of bourgeois society to a level of relentless mockery. He says that poverty arises from abundance, and that the measure of salvation in a society must be read through the liberation and position of women. One of the sharpest critics of bourgeois society, Fourier possesses a dialectical mind capable of grasping and clarifying contradiction. However, this dialectic lacks the power of comprehension. Within this contradiction lies a “vicious cycle” that perpetually repeats itself and encompasses all of humanity’s future. According to Fourier, every stage of history has an ascending and descending branch. Dialectics is always a closed circle that repeats itself, consisting of an orderliness doomed to chaos and a chaos giving way to order. This corresponds to a stage where, while struggling within the contradiction, the contradiction has not yet acquired “that negativity which is the inner impulse of self-movement and life” (Lenin) because only when the contradiction reaches its peak do various elements become dynamic and alive in relation to each other; that is, the solution is achieved through an internal impulse that overcomes it. In the revolutions of the 20th century that occurred in societies without modern heavy industry and in which therefore the development of virulent, active contradictions between labor and capital in the base was stunted, sharp critiques of social decay and corruption were articulated, but we also encounter a lack of understanding that frequently leads to the continued search for the traces of a similar vicious cycle in the new society.

The last of the utopian socialists, Robert Owen, went furthest in putting his ideas into practice. Initially

far removed from communist ideas, Owen set out to alleviate the misery that had emerged in England, where modern large-scale industry was beginning to overturn bourgeois society. With a lofty and childlike simplicity and superior managerial skills, he conducted his first experiment in a spinning mill, where most of the workers were among the most downtrodden in society. The thesis he sought to prove at that time was that of enlightened materialism: that the individual is a product of the conditions surrounding him. The more humane the environment, the further the individual would be from corruption. As a model colony, Lanark, with its 10.5-hour workday, clean housing, and a structure that combined education and work through a nursery system implemented for the first time in history, satisfied not only the workers but also the factory owners who invested in the businesses. Owen paid these investors 5% interest (note: this interest payment practice will appear in socialist experiments) and an unprecedented profit share. This situation led him to communist views. The workers had not been freed from wage slavery, therefore all the fruits of the enterprise should belong to the workers. Since there are social productive forces, then ownership should be a means to ensure the common welfare of the workers. "Owen's communism was based upon this purely business foundation, the outcome, so to say, of commercial calculation" (AD 248). The plan for communist colonies was the result of a careful technical analysis and detailed production processes. Through technical analysis, the size of the colonies, taking their scale into account, was determined to be 5,500 families.

No matter how much Owen proceeded from his business acumen and commercial calculations, his designs led him to challenge the three central institutions of bourgeoisie society: private property, religion, and the bourgeois family. Attacking these three institutions earned him the enmity of the

European bourgeoisie. He carried out his experiments in America. These self-contained islands of agriculture and industry were certainly doomed to failure. Nevertheless, the “labor note” that he employed was, in Engels words, the first step towards much more fundamental social transformation. The unit of these coupons, which were used to facilitate the exchanged of what was produced, was labor time. Engels doesn’t shy away from describing the labor note as “practical proof that the merchant and the manufacturer are socially quite unnecessary” and “introduced as transition measures to the complete communistic organisation of society” (AD 249).

Despite the passing success of utopian socialism as conceived by one of the brightest minds, these communist experiments could not hold their own against the developing bourgeois relations of production. Failure was unavoidable because the experiments didn’t seek to create a new system from within bourgeois productive forces and relations, but sought to impose them from without. Like any imposition from without, it was based not on the internal elements of society, but on the “rational triumph of reason.” Wherever and whenever the productive and other social elements that will build the new society are not yet visible or sufficiently consolidated, the void will be filled with banners declaring the “triumph of reason.”

SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM IS BROUGHT INTO THE WORLD BY THE MATURING PROLETARIAT

What is the position of the modern socialism of Marxism relative to utopian socialism? In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels describes its position proceeding from history and philosophy. All of the utopian thinkers diverge from bourgeois notions of truth and justice and critique bourgeois society, yet the seek to reform it by turning to the same timeless ideals. Modern socialism,

on the other hand, doesn't seek the contradictions and solutions in terms of contemporary philosophy but rather turns to economics. As the capitalist mode of production develops through the full evolution of modern heavy industry, the productive forces that emerge begin to conflict with the bourgeois relations that surround them. These contradictions possess an objective reality independent of all logical conflict and expedite the birth of modern socialism. "Modern socialism is nothing but the reflex, in thought, of this conflict in fact; its ideal reflection in the minds, first, of the class directly suffering under it, the working class" (AD 255).

Engels draws clear boundaries around the mechanical understanding of materialism. This conflict is primary, even if the relationship between its respective elements, the productive forces and the productive relations, has been resolved. Above all, this conflict must be reflected in the ideas of the working class. In short, modern socialism finds its basis not only in the conflict between objective elements independent of all wills within facts, but also in the reflection of this flexibility in the working class. The aspect of the subject that concerns the socialist experiments we will discuss is this: **Communist parties that seek revolution in lands that have not witnessed the full development of modern heavy industry have either erred in their own understanding of scientific socialism, or the attitudes and behaviors of the working class has limited the historical initiative of communist leaders.**

To clarify the issue, Engels lists the foundations of the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production. The core of this conflict is between the social nature of production and capitalist privatization. This conflict manifests itself in conflict between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, in regular and specialized production in the factory, in the form

of anomie created by these factories across society, and in periodic economic crises. Social production describes a level of development that reduces individual production to insignificant remnants, at least in major production sectors.

For each historical period of capitalism, the form and level of conflict between the socialization of production and bourgeois relations of production differ. We can trace these differences through four fundamental products that summarize technical development: textiles, steel, automobiles, and information technology. The path this development took also creates conditions that accelerate the victory of scientific socialism over utopian socialism.

As we know, the first bourgeois foray into industry was textiles, an industry dependent on steam power. Linen, cotton and wool all depend on agricultural production and the textile industry unites labor once divided amongst artisans. England became the textile shop of the world, benefiting from its enormous plantations in America running on increasingly cheap slave labor. However it had a limited impact on the socialization of labor. Above all, the cloth being produced was being sold to tailors or clothing shops. The product of heavy industrial production was fueling small shops, being consumed in this manner. It consigned spinners, dyers, and weavers to history, but was propping up thousands of small workshops. Established near large ports and waterways adjacent to sites of agricultural production, the textile industry brought together former artisans recruited from rural areas. To overcome labor characterized by artisan habits and freedom, modern industry embarked on a major mechanization drive. The artisan class responded with machine-breaking. On the other hand, the textile industry, dependent on raw materials transported from thousands of miles away, could only function with loans. Every social shortage led to a banking crisis tied to textiles, or conversely, every

banking crisis led to social collapse. Internal order in factories depended on external factors such as debt and credit; while it did not produce crises itself, it acted like a lightning rod, drawing all crises onto itself. The limited impact of socializing production was confined to developing a trade unionist mentality of limited, professional gains among workers in the industry.

The steel industry led in many ways to greater socialization relative to the textile industry. It developed together with railroads, the manufacturing of machines, and of course the production of modern weapons. Enormous mines that extracted millions of tons of iron ore carried by train and combined with coal and later gas and electric energy to create a product that could only be consumed on a mass scale vis-à-vis intermediate industrial goods. From mining and transportation to expertise on the power grid and in metal fabrication, the steel industry gave rise to the organization and division of labor on a vast social scale. In this manner, it was the training ground for the proletarian class with the fullest understanding of modern socialism. The steel industry became the primary axis of the organization and division of labor on a nearly nation-wide scale. This material basis enabled and compelled the proletariat to leave behind narrow local and trade perspectives and carried it to the comprehension made possible by modern socialism. Crises were no longer caused by agricultural shortages or banking crises. However, steel, bound to economies of scale, has become the main source of long-term crises characterized by deflation, stemming from overproduction, which evaporates all accumulated capital.

The natural extension of the steel and mechanical industries, the automobile industry, unifies engineering and unskilled labor. Unlike the steel industry, which requires few intermediate industries but enabled dozens of related branches of

industry to flourish, the automobile industry brought together specialized industries uniting them in serial production on the assembly line. The assembly of wheels, windows, and motors consisting of thousands of specialized parts ensured that a single automotive factory enables enormous industrial cities to emerge. Each of these requires hundreds of related areas of production that bring together expert engineering and unskilled labor. Planning within the factory, The planned social production process within the factory spread to the scale of a city. From then on, every crisis would mean the collapse of a city, not just a factory. Sophisticated tools used for pressing, punching, grinding, etc., now displayed a productive force incompatible with the sophisticated wage slavery that experienced every successive process of the production line from one end to the other. Modern socialism's ideal of a classless society now had proven itself in material practice not just on factory floors but in cities structured by industry. IT, or information technology, has truly universalized all of the above sectors. The Steel and automotive industries have enabled the hegemony of massive financial capital groups merged with banks. For this reason, IT, which is the final technical stage in the development of industry, has been directly shaped by the hegemony of monopolies and financial capital. By its very nature, it could not be confined to this or that city or country. The satellites that have enveloped the earth in their orbits along with fiber optic highways have elevated IT to an industrial level that can only be conceived and operated on a global scale. The processes of production has been shaped accordingly. Cars are made up of thousands of parts and airplanes of tens of thousand, but IT requires at least 250, 000 components and because they are all in the hands of monopolies are patented accordingly. For example, a standard smart phone has 250,000 patented parts according to data from 2015. These

parts are standardized to the highest degree possible, require production facilities specialized to the same degree, and can only be produced with a global organization and division of labor. The contradiction between the social nature of production and capitalist private property, has been made clear, concrete, and tangible by the stranglehold of 250,000 patents. This contradiction can only become so vibrant, active, and palpable at its peak.

The core of IT's growth is computer chip production. Today, a 30-centimeter disk containing thousands of chips has more than a trillion transistors. More than 500 kilometers worth of wire is embedded in a single chip. This is the wholesale disappearance of handwork. All of this is accomplished with microscopic ovens, micro-scale centrifuges, and machines that use lasers and ultraviolet light to process and finish them. Leaving living labor out of the equation is the result of long years of technical research and accompanying specialized labor. Ultimately, it brings to the fore a production process that has become unified and elevated to the level of abstract labor. As each chip passes through multiple stages, everything exhibits mechanical regularity. And this carries the contradiction that Engels emphasized between the regularity of socialized production in a factory and all the anarchy of the market to its highest point. The astronomical sums and lengthy research required mean that each site of production must achieve global market reach. And the bigger a market, the more its anarchic elements multiply. For this reason, because the trusts that control much more advanced chip production technology do not have the guaranteed market, they can't deploy this technology in production. Productive power exceeds the relations of production.

The chips produced are combined with other components for use in thousands of different devices, and that's where human labor comes into play. The

conflict between the proletariat and bourgeoisie reaches a new level in these factories. In these kinds of factories that produce for a global market, workers find they have become “advanced machines,” as Wang Hui writes in *China’s Twentieth Century*. They are caught in the conflict of having lost all their human qualities rather than suffering from poor working conditions. Although the production process to which they are bound has equipped them with diverse skills and capacities, production reduces human activity at this level to a machine cog. Thus, the conflict between the development of labor, the most important element of productive forces, and the relationships that reduce it to nothingness becomes a matter of “life and death.” Most worker suicides occur in such factories.

Every level of technical development in the industrial base strengthened the position of scientific socialists against utopian socialists. The ideological defeat they suffered at the hands of Marxism only dug their graves. The development of modern industry buried them under a massive heap of earth they could not possibly move. But wherever industrial development lagged, that soil remained frail and weak so that when they sprang up like weeds, it seemed to be proof of history’s ironic destiny to progress.

1.2

THE SIGN OF SOCIALIST INSTITUTIONS IN CAPITAL

The entirety of Marx and Engels theoretical endeavor was to give socialism a scientific basis, thereby putting the powerful weapon of superior philosophical, historical, social, and economic theories in the hands of the working class. The constructed socialism not on the basis of the superior nation nor in the search for enduring justice, but in the class perspective, historicism, and objectivity of historical materialism. Firstly, the material basis of the new society is to be found in existing capitalist relations of production. Secondly, the capitalist system has developed and still contains a series of contradictions, and at some point, the solution that imposes itself will be possible through the vitality gained by resolving the internal contradiction, not the external one. After a certain point, these self-imposed solutions will lay the cornerstones in the construction of socialism. And thirdly, the entirety of this process of destruction and reconstruction, will be overseen by the proletarian class alone. This is because it contains these maturing contradictions in its own conditions of existence.

In Marx and Engels writings, we do not find a detailed definition of socialism beyond its general anatomy modern (scientific) socialism. Whether in *Critique of the Gotha Program* or *Anti-Dühring*, although they occasionally put forward forward-thinking ideas about society in order to expose the narrow-mindedness of their opponents, they were

careful not to go beyond polemics. As much as their stance was based on historical materialism it was also a political and organizational stance. As the first statute of the First International states, the emancipation of the working class will be by its own doing. Objective elements, contradictions, and conflicts are one matter. But what will shape the new society, which will be the concrete embodiment of this objective structure, are the conditions under which the working class' historical initiative, self-assertion, and victory are realized. *Capital* and *Anti-Dühring* are replete with views regarding this general path of the socialist project.

The reasons mentioned above explain why in all three volumes of *Capital* there is not a single chapter dedicated to socialism. On occasion Marx will clarify the issue or connections to the topic at hand by referring to future society in what amount to no more than a few sentences where the phrase "socialist society" is not to be found. These are scattered so randomly throughout the work, so intertwined with other topics within paragraphs, that one must read entire volumes from cover to cover to extract them. The publishers of *Capital* rushed to readers' aid with an index. In the three extensive volumes, readers who track down the scattered references to socialism with the help of the index won't need more than a half hour to read all of them.

Marx analyzes bourgeois society and its contradictions using the example of England, where these relations were well-established. For this reason, the scattered thoughts regarding socialism are all made with reference to England. Marx sums up the necessity of capturing and dissecting every phenomenon in its most developed form in a single sentence in the introduction to *Grundrisse*: "Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape." It encapsulates all of Marxist political economy. Once the most advanced and highest form is known,

elements in newer forms that have yet to complete their development and appear to be mere details, but in fact constitute the true lasting aspect, can thus but brought out from the shadows of more eye-catching but ultimately transient elements. For this reason, England becomes the key to understanding the Germany, France, or United States of the time, all of which lagged behind the former.³

As such, when considering the predictions about socialist society in *Capital*, it is necessary to bear in mind that the leading capitalist nation of the time, England, was the primary reference and to evaluate these predictions accordingly.

PRODUCTIVITY AND SHARING

The initial and most striking allusion emerges in his treatment of commodity fetishism. Bourgeois economists, enchanted by a fetishism that renders the value relations governing commodity exchange eternal, create the most absurd kinds of economic categories. To lay bare how the fetish itself is unique to a society founded upon commodity exchange, and how all its mystery and sorcery would dissipate the moment one passes to other social forms—thereby condemning bourgeois economics to categorical absurdity—Marx first turns to the imagined island of Robinson Crusoe, then to the feudal estates of medieval Europe shrouded in darkness. And finally, he gestures toward the future. Yet he would not stop there.

“Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on

3 When analyzing socialism in this work, we follow Marx in proceeding from the most advanced socialist projects. For now we can present this thesis: The most advanced form of socialism is the self-critique of forms that are still developing. What then constitutes the self-critique of the most advanced form? It is either communism or loosing power to counter-revolutionaries. In advanced socialism both will reveal what is secondary and what is essential, what is true power and what is merely propaganda.

their work with the means of production in common, in which the labor power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labor power of the community.”⁴

It should come as no surprise that Marx, who remained unwaveringly committed to communist society throughout his entire life, introduces the sentence defining the most essential characteristic of both socialism and communism with the phrase “by way of change.” He employs irony to underscore the pitiful complexity in which bourgeois economists entangle themselves—a complexity whose solution lies plainly before them and is attainable through the simplest of steps. To these economists, who habitually resort to Robinson Crusoe-style fantasy islands to explain every conceptual mystery they encounter, Marx seems to say: “Look, forget the ideal of socialism—you wouldn’t believe in that anyway. But since you’re so adept at spinning Robinson fables, just add one more fable like this, and you’ll see how all mystery vanishes.” In truth, he is addressing the workers who will read his book. Scientific socialism is not nearly as complex as its name might suggest. On the contrary, it is as simple as a single step taken out of a dark cave—a step in which all the convolutions dragged along by bourgeois categories are instantly resolved and brought into the light. With that same simplicity, he asks his worker-reader to envision this collective society. The product of this society will be a social product: one portion will be deployed to set new means of production into motion, while the remainder will be distributed among its members in the form of means of consumption. “The mode of this distribution will vary with the productive organisation of the

⁴ The writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are cited from the *Marx Engels Complete Works (MECW)* published by Lawrence and Wishart in collaboration with Progress Publishers and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism Moscow in 1975 in London. Capital Volume 1, MECW vol. 35, is hereafter cited parenthetically as CI.

community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers" (*Ibid.*).

A society born from the common ownership of the means of production and the united labor-power of free individuals is communist society. Yet Marx was acutely aware that even this society must, within its own historical development, be divided into distinct phases. Depending on the degree of historical advancement, production and distribution will assume different forms. Though he does not state it explicitly here, the necessity of socialism as the lower stage of communism was already clear in his mind—long before the Critique of the Gotha Program. Still, he does not delve into the precise principles that will differentiate these future historical phases. Instead, he guides the reader—whose habits of thought are still shaped by relations of commodity exchange—toward grasping this new society in a manner that is profoundly simple and readily comprehensible. "We will assume, but merely for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities, that the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labor time" (*Ibid.*).

This conditional hypothesis, serving as a kind of warning, propels the reader to consider that distribution in communist society will rest upon different criteria and norms. These criteria and norms will gain clarity through themes he has not yet addressed but will develop in later chapters. Advancing his conditional assumption, Marx reveals that labor-time will play a dual role. Its "apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community" (*Ibid.*).

Society can simply calculate, according to a plan, how much infant formula, how many mobile phones it requires, and how much production time must be allocated to each individual product to meet those needs. This same principle will also serve to

calculate the share of labor-time allotted to each individual, and the quantity of products to which they are entitled as a result of that labor. What is laid out here, then, is a sketch of communism that is profoundly simple and readily comprehensible—not merely in terms of production, but of distribution as well. “The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution” (*Ibid.*).

Marx derives the simple and readily comprehensible conditions for dissolving commodity fetishism from the law of equivalence, which runs parallel to—that is, along the same line as—commodity production. The line moves in the same direction, yet it is parallel, operating on a different plane. What creates this difference is the common ownership of the means of production and the individuals’ creation of a unified labor-power. But the first outcome achieved is the abolition of commodity fetishism.⁵

This paragraph by Marx must be read in light of the conditional assumptions he exactly draws our attention to. In order to emphasize how straightforward and comprehensible the path beyond commodity fetishism can be, Marx constructs a scenario where production and distribution are organized according to the measure of labor-time. However, when he stresses that distribution will vary depending on the productive organization of the community and the historical stage of development attained by the producers, he undoubtedly has in mind the distinctions between town and country, and between mental and manual labor. Since his purpose in the relevant pages of *Capital* is to expose the

⁵ Some authors who desperately seek to explain the collapse of the USSR conclude that elements similar to profitability, which was used in Soviet planning from the very outset, re-created a form of commodity fetishism. Hazal Yalın cannot avoid this error in her 2021 book *Russia: Collapse, Rise and Dynamics* [Rusya: Çöküş, Yükseliş ve Dinamikler].

conditions that give rise to commodity fetishism, Marx does not give details on the conditions governing the division of labor and distribution in the future new society. Even when distinguishing between skilled and unskilled labor in the very first pages of the book, he only touches on the subject in passing. But we will examine Marx's explanations on this matter within the framework of Anti-Dühring.

Proceeding sequentially, we see that In *Capital*, ideas about communist society are scattered, as they arise in connection with the topics analyzed in the critique of capitalism. When read in order, they do not yield a complete, coherent picture. This is precisely Marx's advantage over the utopian socialists. He extracts the developed elements of the new society from among the components of the capitalist system, which he analyzes one by one. Thus, the fantastical elements that plague every comprehensive blueprint have no place in the breadth of Marx's work.

UNITING EDUCATION AND PRODUCTION

The second reference to the new society in Volume I of *Capital* appears in chapter fifteen. Here, Marx discusses Robert Owen's educational experiments in combining labor and schooling. Owen implemented a system in which children participated in factory work for a short part of the day and received education for the remaining daytime hours. Compared to bourgeois schools, this was equivalent to only half the school day. Keeping them confined to schoolrooms all day would waste their health and energy in a system that was also unproductive in terms of educational outcomes. The results were so brilliant that even bourgeois spokespeople declared it a success that ought to be emulated.

"From the Factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the case of