

Dear Comrades,

“Problems in the construction of socialism after the proletarian revolution” - don't we German communists have more pressing problems?

True enough, a proletarian revolution is not to be expected for the time being. We also don't know if anyone here present will get a chance to contribute to the construction of socialism - many of us presumably won't. Nonetheless, this problem is relevant not just for the future but also for the here and now. An understanding of this problem creates the basis for a differentiated analysis of states which proclaim, seek to follow or are following a non-capitalist path. A differentiated approach is necessary when we are involved in discussions that are frequently conducted in the global communist movement and often have the dynamics to deepen differences. Without a differentiated approach the understanding of global development is difficult and an assessment of global power relations is prone to error.

In today's report we do not want to conclusively assess the social situation in the PR China, Vietnam or Laos. We will likewise not conclude a definitive evaluation of the reform process in Cuba. Nor will we adhere to any position on the DPRK this weekend. This weekend we want to open up a debate.

We assume that we will have made progress by the time of the next party congress and we will adopt a clarification of our position where necessary. In our positions up until now we have, among other things, held to the resolution on international work in our last party congress.

We will open the first phase of the discussion with today's report. We had also talked about including Renate's report - “The Cuban Path to Socialism”. We want to accompany that with an educational newspaper as well as other formats. We plan this first phase as an educational topic at least until the beginning of next year and we want all groups in the party to participate.

I will approach the topic in various chapters and from different standpoints/questions. Some are theoretical, some of a historical nature. Some revolve around political or economical questions. Others have to do with class struggle and the power relations, some consist of mass- and class-consciousness and their development. The problem with this is that even when I separate them into different chapters the questions are interrelated and influence each other.

## **1. The problem of the timespan between the proletarian revolution, the stage of socialist construction and the building of a classless communist society.**

When they were formulating the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels assumed a quite compressed process. They wrote:

*The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.*

*Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production.*

*These measures will, of course, be different in different countries.<sup>1</sup>*

The Manifesto, after a set of immediate demands, continues:

*When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.*

*In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.<sup>2</sup>*

In Lenin's analysis Imperialism is a special phase of capitalism. Under the new conditions of his time, he came to the conclusion that it was entirely imaginable that the proletarian revolution might not occur first of all in the

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<sup>1</sup> MECW 6, p. 504

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.505-506

highest developed capitalist states, but rather it was possible at its 'weakest link'. This, together with the experiences of the Paris Commune, led to ideas which he set down before the October revolution in his work 'State and Revolution'.

*Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), only then "the state... ceases to exist", and "it becomes possible to speak of freedom". Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realised, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to wither away, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities, and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state.*<sup>3</sup>

*The first phase of communism, therefore, cannot yet provide justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still persist, but the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible because it will be impossible to seize the means of production--the factories, machines, land, etc.--and make them private property. In smashing Lassalle's petty-bourgeois, vague phrases about "equality" and "justice" in general, Marx shows the course of development of communist society, which is compelled to abolish at first only the "injustice" of the means of production seized by individuals, and which is unable at once to eliminate the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of consumer goods "according to the amount of labor performed" (and not according to needs).*<sup>4</sup>

*And so, in the first phase of communist society (usually called socialism) "bourgeois law" is not abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. "Bourgeois law" recognises them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into common property. To that extent--and to that extent alone--"bourgeois law" disappears.*<sup>5</sup>

*The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high state of development of communism at which the antithesis between*

3 LCW 25, p. 467

4 *ibid.*, p. 471

5 *ibid.*, p 472

*mental and physical labor disappears, at which there consequently disappears one of the principal sources of modern social inequality--a source, moreover, which cannot on any account be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.*

*This expropriation will make it possible for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already retarding this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labor, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labor, of transforming labor into "life's prime want"--we do not and cannot know.*

*That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasising the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the higher phase of communism, and leaving the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away quite open, because there is no material for answering these questions.<sup>6</sup>*

Next to the question of the longer duration of the first, socialist phase, Lenin - before the October revolution - assumes that the development of productivity is of central importance for the development towards the goal of a society whose belief is the satisfaction of the needs of all. He expressly pointed out that only in the phase of socialism will people become used to rules of living together without any compulsion because they will have been freed from capitalism. And, in this phase, Lenin makes the assumption that the socialisation of the means of production would cause a powerful growth in the development of productivity.

Here, Lenin had to acknowledge a few years later that this alone was not enough to cause a swift automatic process. He elaborated on the necessity for the "New Economic Policy", the NEP. Lenin defined the NEP in the years 1920/21. In his report "The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Executive for Political-Cultural Enlightenment" he explained that in the first years after the revolution the too-rapid attempt to go over to 'communist production and distribution' led to a serious defeat because it was forgotten that there was: *the necessity for a prolonged, complex transition through socialist accounting and control from capitalist society (and the less*

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6 *ibid.*, pp. 473-474

*developed it is the longer the transition will take) to reach even the precursor stages of a communist society.<sup>7</sup>*

Talking about the NEP, he said:

*The New Economic Policy means substituting a tax for the requisitioning of food; it means reverting to capitalism to a considerable extent—to what extent we do not know. Concessions to foreign capitalists (true, only very few have been accepted, especially when compared with the number we have offered) and leasing enterprises to private capitalists definitely mean restoring capitalism, and this is part and parcel of the New Economic Policy.<sup>8</sup>*

He wrote about the dangers under the headline “Who will win - Capitalist or Soviet Power?”:

*The issue in the present war is—who will win, who will first take advantage of the situation: the capitalist, whom we are allowing to come in by the door, and even by several doors (and by many doors we are not aware of, and which open without us, and in spite of us), or proletarian state power?<sup>9</sup>*

Lenin had already in 1918 rejected ‘left-wing’ criticism of heightened flexibility in economic questions. In his work “On Left-Wing infantilism and Petit Bourgeois Mentality” he says:

*We shall pass on to the misfortunes of our “Left” Communists in the sphere of home policy. It is difficult to read the following phrases in the theses on the present situation without smiling.*

*“The systematic use of the remaining means of production is conceivable only if a most determined policy of socialisation is pursued” . . . “not to capitulate to the bourgeoisie and its petty-bourgeois intellectualist servitors, but to rout the bourgeoisie and to put down sabotage completely. . . .”*

*Dear “Left Communists”, how determined they are, but how little thinking they display (...)*

*Yesterday, the main task of the moment was, as determinedly as possible, to nationalise, confiscate, beat down and crush the bourgeoisie, and put down sabotage. Today, only a blind man could fail to see that we have nationalised, confiscated, beaten down and put down more than we have had time to count. The difference between socialisation and simple confiscation is that confiscation can be carried out by “determination” alone, without the ability to*

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7 LCW 33, pp. 61-62

8 *ibid.*, p. 64

9 *ibid.*, p. 63

*calculate and distribute properly, whereas socialisation cannot be brought about without this ability (...)*

*“To put down sabotage completely. . . .” What a task they have found! Our saboteurs are quite sufficiently “put down”. What we lack is something quite different. We lack the proper calculation of which saboteurs to set to work and where to place them. We lack the organisation of our own forces that is needed for, say, one Bolshevik leader or controller to be able to supervise a hundred saboteurs who are now coming into our service (...)*

*If the words we have quoted provoke a smile, the following discovery made by the “Left Communists” will provoke nothing short of Homeric laughter. According to them, under the “Bolshevik deviation to the right” the Soviet Republic is threatened with “evolution towards state capitalism”. They have really frightened us this time! (...)*

*It has not occurred to them that state capitalism would be a step forward as compared with the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic (...)*

*No one, I think, in studying the question of the economic system of Russia, has denied its transitional character. Nor, I think, has any Communist denied that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognised as a socialist order.*

*But what does the word “transition” mean? Does it not mean, as applied to an economy, that the present system contains elements, particles, fragments of both capitalism and socialism? (...)*

*In the first place, economically, state capitalism is immeasurably superior to our present economic system.*

*In the second place, there is nothing terrible in it for Soviet power, for the Soviet state is a state in which the power of the workers and the poor is assured. The “Left Communists” failed to understand these unquestionable truths, which, of course, a “Left Socialist-Revolutionary”, who cannot connect any ideas on political economy in his head in general, will never understand, but which every Marxist must admit.<sup>10</sup>*

Note that Lenin made these announcements quite a few years before the beginning of the NEP. When and why was the NEP ended? Its end occurs in the years 1928 and 1929. Up to that point it had, according to Stalin’s statements on the matter, facilitated economic successes and had arrived at its limits on account of the situation of the international class struggle. In 1929 Stalin wrote in “A Year of Great Change”:

*We may, therefore, conclude that our Party succeeded in making good use of*

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<sup>10</sup> LCW 27, pp. 333-336

*our retreat during the first stages of the New Economic Policy in order, in the subsequent stages, to organise the change and to launch a successful offensive against the capitalist elements.*<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, he described how a background for this change was the reluctance of foreign capital to make loans and credits available to the Soviet Union for the purpose of building up heavy industry. In this way they wished to block the construction of socialism and frustrate Soviet power.

*It is precisely for this reason that the capitalists of all countries refuse us loans and credits, for they assume that we cannot by our own efforts cope with the problem of accumulation, that we shall suffer shipwreck in the task of reconstructing our heavy industry, and be compelled to come to them cap in hand, for enslavement.*<sup>12</sup>

All of these statements show that communists must learn that the duration of the transition to communism will be considerably longer as was expected during the time of the “Communist Manifesto”.

Walter Ulbricht, among others, dealt with this question in 1967 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of ‘Capital’: He summed up socialist construction:

*The VI party congress (in 1963 -PK) established that socialist production relations in the DDR are victorious. We consider this victory not as an end to socialist construction but rather as an important stage in the construction of a socialist society. With the victory of socialist production relations, all elements of the social system, including the production relations themselves begin to develop socialism on their own basis (...)*

*When we consider the historical process of the origin of elements of socialism in the antifascist-democratic order up until the present, then two phases of development are to be seen. In the first phase, the basis of socialism was created by the incremental transition of the means of production into the hands of the people, by the organising of a planned economy, by the gradual development of agricultural production co-operatives, manual labour production co-operatives and companies with state participation, socialist forms of trade as well as important education reforms. This phase ended with the victory of socialist productive relations, with which the system of the economic laws of socialism came completely into effect. (...) What is the most important conclusion that we come to in light of this? It is that socialism is not a quick transitional phase in the development of*

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11 SCW 12, p. 124

12 *ibid.*, p. 128

*society, but rather an independent socio-economic formation in the historic epoch of the transition from capitalism to communism on a world scale.*<sup>13</sup>

## **2. The definition of the term “socialism” as the characterisation of a stage on the path to communism; as a scientific concept; as a slogan of struggle - with inexactitudes.**

In our party programme we give the following short definition of the categories of communism and socialism:

*As the first phase of communist social formation, socialism is at the same time a stage on the path to communism - that society in which there are no more classes; in which work for the benefit of society has become the primary necessity of life and the commodity form of products is abolished. Then socialised production and the all-round development of humans will have reached such a level that the principle, “From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs”, can be realised. The transition to communism will be prepared in a long historical process through the construction of socialism.*

*The socialist social order presupposes the achieving of political power by the working class in alliance with other working people. It is based on social ownership of all important means of production, financial institutions and natural resources. It thus enables the planned use and increase of social wealth for the benefit of the general public and the ever improving satisfaction of growing cultural needs.*<sup>14</sup>

We are assuming, therefore, a period after political power of the working class has been achieved, a period which will be used to gradually wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie. But when does one speak of socialism? Lenin points out that socialism is not only a scientific concept/definition, but also a political concept of struggle when he says *“that the term Soviet Socialist Republic means the determination of the Soviet power to realise the transition to socialism, but by no means that the new economic conditions are described as socialist”*<sup>15</sup>

These are the reasons why the definitions of the stages and phases on the way to a classless society were and are no more intricate to describe than the classless society itself.

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13 Walter Ulbricht, Die Bedeutung des Werkes „Das Kapital“ von Karl Marx für die Schaffung des entwickelten gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus in der DDR und den Kampf gegen das staatsmonopolistische Herrschaftssystem in Westdeutschland, Berlin 1967

14 Programm der DKP, 21

15 LCW 32, 330



As a scientific term, the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" can be used for the first phase and the socialist and communist stage of society can – as an extension of that which we formulate in the party program – still be described as follows: For the first, the socialist phase applies: "From everyone according to their abilities, to each according to their performance". For the communist phase, the following applies: "From everyone according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". Necessary conditions for a communist society are also the overcoming of the commodity-money relationship and the law of value as well as the prerequisites for the dying off of the state.

This scientific vagueness also led to differences in the history of the communist movement. In the eighties of the previous century, for example, it was said in the Soviet Union that communism was being built – from today's point of view certainly voluntaristically – while the GDR spoke of the developed, socialist society, the beginning of which marked the victory of the socialist relations of production.

An additional problem arose from the fact that the possibly politically necessary slogan of struggle of the irrevocability of the victory of socialist production relations led to an underestimation of the power of the class opponent and the persistence of ideological remnants of capitalism in the mass consciousness.

Of course the problem of "everyone according to his performance" and, on the other hand, the necessity of increasing production also result in an area of contradiction. This must be addressed through socialist competition, though that will often not suffice. If, as Lenin wrote, one then has to open doors for capitalism in order to use it, then capitalists are not satisfied with "everyone according to their performance". This is alien to capitalism and the capitalists since they profit from the exploitation of the working people due to their ownership of the means of production– however much this is disguised – and this has nothing to do with performance in the aforementioned sense.

### **3. Mass- and class-consciousness, consumption, the satisfaction of needs and the development of needs.**

Here I would like to refer to the complex of problems that the needs of the masses are first and foremost the needs that they bring with them from the pre-revolutionary period. Clearly, this also has a very long lasting effect and leads to the fact that satisfaction in a societal comparison strongly depends on the satisfaction of direct consumption. Those of us who experienced the GDR can recall that a central reason for West German monopoly capital's willingness to make concessions to its own working class was the showcase function of the FRG. From today's point of view, an ecologically sensible

achievement of the GDR such as the priority of public transport over private transport wrongly appeared in the consciousness of many people in both the FRG and GDR as an example of the superiority of capitalism – in which everyone had a car. This created constant pressure on the GDR. This pressure led to political decisions – also possibly to the fact that consumption needs should be satisfied earlier than economically viable.

There is, in retrospect, criticism as to whether the increasing orientation towards the consumer needs of the masses, as expressed in the "Unity of Economic and Social Policy" in the GDR, which was robustly developed under Erich Honecker, was in fact an economic mistake. Certainly, however, it was due to political pressure generated by imperialism through the "showcase FRG".

Unfortunately, it also seems to be the case that successes which were achieved, which are at least as important for the development of the productive power of humans as direct consumption, play a lesser role in the individual comparison of social systems. There is, at least, a tendency for many people to rather underestimate good education or health care compared to the supply of consumer goods in the construction phase of socialism.

#### **4. The problem of the development of productivity.**

In any case, the development of productivity is a central question. It is a question of survival in the international class struggle. It is a question for overcoming poverty, it is a prerequisite for satisfying people's needs, and it creates the resources which are necessary to defend socialism.

We recall again Lenin's statement in 'State and Revolution':

*This expropriation will make it possible for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already retarding this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technology already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society.<sup>16</sup>*

He spoke of "making possible", not of an immediate automatic process. Nevertheless, he says a little later that it was a matter of "using the saboteurs" and, in the justification of the NEP, opening doors to the capitalist – whereby the risk was that the latter would be able to use the new situation

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16 LCW 25, p. 473

better and faster than the young Soviet power would.

Other attempts to achieve the necessary increase in productivity through campaigns were usually not adorned with success. An example of this is the experience the Chinese communists had with the "Great Leap Forward".

One is compelled to acquire the means of production from the capitalists – in which case the means must be available. The socialist state requires surplus product and it needs it under the conditions of a world market dominated and dictated by capitalism/imperialism. The "Council for Mutual Economic Assistance" (Comecon) – simply formulated as the institution of economic cooperation of the socialist countries "of Moscow character" – was able to develop internal cooperation that was much more strongly characterised by planning and solidarity than all forms of economic cooperation of exploiting societies. Nevertheless, it was weaker and partly dependent on imperialist countries or on institutions dominated by them. This weakness was also a result of the split in the world communist movement which led to the PRC not being a member of the Comecon. This dependence was regularly exploited through blackmail, economic wrecking and sabotage.

Economic sabotage can also take quite simple forms: Panic buying in the GDR, which then led to actual shortages, was provoked a number of times by the fact that media of the FRG announced the alleged shortage.

## **5. The problem of forms of ownership – questions of state capitalism, of socialist property on the way to socialism.**

In an article in the "Marxistische Blätter" I dealt with the forms of ownership of the means of production in the GDR and wrote that private ownership of the means of production existed until 1972 – a considerable period - 20 years - after the decision to begin building socialism. However, even this statement was not entirely correct, because it did not take cooperative property into consideration where, for example, the farmers in the GDR remained owners of their land. Of course there are also historical reasons for this. Small farmers and agricultural workers had to be won over as allies of the working class in the anti-fascist democratic construction. It was against war criminals and Junkers that the offensive was to be directed – hence the land reform, which initially created land for more than 500,000 new owners of the means of production. In the course of the construction of socialism, the LPGs (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft - Agricultural Production Cooperatives) were formed, nonetheless the farmers remained the owners of the land. However, they ceded the control to the cooperative, i.e. to the collective of farmers and landless employees of the cooperative. They were therefore owners of means of production when they renounced the individual control. If one follows Lenin's general class definition – "Classes are large

groups of people who differ from each other according to their place in a historically determined system of social production, according to their (...) relationship to the means of production" – then the class analysis in the GDR was correct when it spoke of a new class, namely the cooperative farmers. Cooperative property was referred to as a form of socialist property in the GDR.

It is interesting for this class of cooperative farmers that they were owners of means of production and so arranged themselves with this situation that they no longer had direct control over them.

## **6. Problems of classes, of class struggle in relation to forms of property on the path to socialism – The integration of (oppressed) classes to the hegemony of the ruling class – Problems of exercising the political power of the working class.**

If there are classes in a society then there is as a rule also a class struggle. If there are capitalists in a society then – at least if their number is not completely marginal – there is also a capitalist class. Looked at in this way, there were still phases with an existing capitalist class in all socialist countries after the proletarian revolution.

Indeed, we know from painful experience that there is a difference between the "class in itself" – that is, the objectively existing one due to its place in the historically determined system of social production – and the one that recognises itself as such ("class for itself"). With regard to the working class under capitalism, it is precisely this formation of the class that is the great problem. Objective and subjective factors oppose this formation. Sections of the working class are integrated into the strategy of the capitalists, which intensifies in the imperialist stage. The media, ideological apparatus, education and much more are mobilised to hinder this formation.

But how will it be at a time when the working class has come to power? Lenin already pointed out that the power of the working class is not only an instrument of oppression: it can be learned from capitalism that it was possible to integrate parts of the working class or to conceal oppression in such a way that it is not perceived as such. Integration of a capitalist class into the proletarian state certainly requires bribery by allowing the capitalists to make a profit.

However, the risk, already repeatedly mentioned, that Lenin described remains :

*Who will win, who will first take advantage of the situation: the capitalist, whom we are allowing to come in by the door, and even by several doors*

*(and by many doors we are not aware of, and which open without us, and in spite of us), or proletarian state power?<sup>17</sup>*

The durability of the proletarian state power is thus of decisive importance and with that – according to historical experience – above all the durability of the Communist Party. Under certain circumstances, the class opponent will direct his main thrust against other parts of state power – in the GDR this was above all the Ministry of State Security – but the function of the party is decisive for the question of proletarian state power. Is it still avant-garde – or has it lost this role at some point?

## **7. The influence of the international situation.**

In my view, there is nothing at present that suggests that future attempts to break through in the direction of socialism will occur simultaneously in entire regions or continents. There is much to indicate that, even in the coming period, there will be rather weaker economies – "weaker links". These attempts will continue to occur for a long time within the framework of worldwide power-relations which is and will be shaped by the dominance of imperialism.

In earlier phases, the inventory of the anti-socialist struggle of imperialism consisted mainly of military intervention, sabotage, assassinations and wars. Here imperialism has expanded its repertoire. In the times when European socialism was strong, the arms race, economic blockade, ideological laxity and other methods were added. Today they are supplemented by colour revolutions, human-rights imperialism or the infiltration of divisive tendencies into revolutionary forces and their allies – imperialism has perfected these methods. On the other hand, ultimately, the only chance of survival for revolutionary states is if they succeed in exploiting and deepening contradictions within the imperialist camp. An important instrument of this policy is the offer to foreign capital to make and realise projects in their own country.

We should be absolutely clear about this: in the struggle against socialism, imperialism does not shy away from any crime, any brutality, any victims – even if these count in the millions. Imperialism may occasionally come with a velvet glove – even without war, people today die as a result of blockades or sanctions. This forces socialism to spend on the military, intelligence services and so on – the means for this must be generated and this causes shortages for the satisfaction of other needs. This forces socialism to constantly deliberate who is friend and who is foe. When answering this question, one should make as few mistakes as possible – in both directions. Unfortunately, mistakes will be made.

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<sup>17</sup> LCW 33, p. 65

## **8. International economic relations and dependencies.**

As long as imperialism has influence there will be economic dependencies and it will often be able to dictate the rules as long as it is still dominant.

We remember how the price of copper fell worldwide when the copper mines in Chile were nationalised, something which put massive pressure on that country's economy. A similar process is happening with Venezuela today – even though neither Chile was socialist then nor is Venezuela socialist today.

However, attempts to escape this dependence through extensive autarchy are, in my opinion, also condemned to failure. This is because of economic reasons, because of the necessity of the development of the productive forces and because of the necessary exploitation of internal imperialist contradictions.

Dependence is about raw materials, about food, about technology, but above all about regulating the global economy. Much of that is determined today by the International Monetary Fund, by the World Bank – both essentially guided by the interests of imperialism. To escape from this is unrealistic today - even in times when the Comecon existed it was ultimately only possible to do this internally. Despite the near-equilibrium in the military field, imperialism was economically ahead, and in addition to this there was the unfortunate division between the Comecon countries and the People's Republic of China. The Comecon covered a considerable part of the world including the Soviet Union, the European socialist countries, Vietnam and Cuba. At its high point, this was enlarged by cooperation agreements with countries in Africa that took a socialist path, but also with countries such as Mexico and Iraq. It thus was possible to begin internal exchange relations which were free from imperialist and neo-colonial exploitation, which represented something new in the world. Unfortunately, that is now history.

A decisive aspect of economic dependence is represented in the question of the prevailing currency. Even at the peak of the Comecon, where the ruble was an internal currency, foreign exchange was traded - usually in US dollars, or largely in the case of the GDR also with the Deutsch Mark. These foreign exchanges had to be generated – a welcome opportunity for imperialism to extort relative dumping prices from the socialist countries or to compel them to take unpopular measures – for example the Intershops in the GDR.

If, as is currently the case with the US dollar, a national currency acts as a world currency, it usually also represents an economic strengthening of that state. It is therefore only logical that there are attempts to counter this at present, some of which exist on the part of the BRICS states, but now also

within the framework of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. With this comes the problem of the convertibility of currencies. If one also uses a currency in the external relationship with imperialism the possibility opens up for imperialism to speculate with the currency against the socialist economy. If one doesn't do this, one is faced with the foreign exchange problem.

From my point of view, it is a fact that no country which wants to build socialism can completely escape the influence of imperialism with the result that at least partial cooperation with parts of the opposing camp is also necessary. It is also a fact that this area is also a decisive area of the class struggle – the international class struggle.

This results in an additional problem: socialist companies must also operate in foreign capitalist countries within the framework of such partial cooperation. However, they cannot build "socialist islands" but will have to act more or less like their capitalist competitors – otherwise they will not be able to do what they are supposed to: to generate the means for the construction of socialism.

### **9. A pure socialist revolution will not happen during the imperialist stage - this has consequences for the policy of alliances during the construction of socialism.**

All experience since the October Revolution suggests that proletarian/socialist revolutions do not necessarily begin as such or rather that the proletarian/socialist character is overlaid with and influenced by other moments. The October Revolution was a proletarian revolution on the one hand and liberation of the small peasants from the semi-feudal yoke on the other.

The Chinese and Cuban revolutions, as well as the victory in Vietnam, were at the same time processes of national liberation. The revolutions in the people's democracies in Europe and the GDR began with the anti-fascist-democratic upheaval and also had the character of national liberation. They were not everywhere the result of the struggle of the popular masses, but everywhere they were the result of the liberation by the victory of the Red Army of the Soviet Union which had entered into a fragile alliance with the Western Allies. The beginnings of the revolutions in Angola, Mozambique and other Portuguese colonies were dominated by the character of national liberation, by the anti-colonial struggle. In Portugal, the anti-fascist liberation was in the foreground; I am unsure in the characterisation of Chile under Allende. In Chile and Portugal, the counter-revolution prevailed before it was possible to further develop the progressive process into a proletarian revolution. In Venezuela, there is much to suggest that the degree of national

liberation reached thus far is threatened by the fear of important forces of breaking with capitalism.

However, I do not want to go into detail about individual processes here, but rather to point out that this characteristic of revolutions led to the fact that the first push was usually only against a part of capital, sometimes even only against a part of monopoly capital.

In the Soviet occupation zone these were the war criminals and Junkers, in the people's democracies the collaborators with the fascists, in the People's Republic of China and Vietnam those who collaborated with the occupiers. And in order to be able to direct this attack against them, it also was usually necessary to not only sound out the possibilities of an alliance as broadly as possible, but also to realise them.

A brilliant historical example of how communists dealt with such challenges is the KPD's call of 11 June 1945. There, the following goal is formulated:

"With the destruction of Hitlerism, it is at the same time necessary to bring to completion the matter of the democratisation of Germany, the matter of the bourgeois-democratic transformation that began in 1848, to completely eliminate the feudal remnants and to destroy the reactionary Old Prussian militarism with all its economic and political offshoots.

We are of the opinion that the path of imposing the Soviet system on Germany would be wrong because this path does not correspond to the current development conditions in Germany. Rather, we are of the opinion that the decisive interests of the German people in the present situation prescribe a different path for Germany, namely the establishment of an anti-fascist, democratic regime, a parliamentary-democratic republic with all democratic rights and freedoms for the people."

In the KPD's call, measures were proposed that were aimed at potential alliance partners. I will mention two here:

"Fight against hunger, unemployment and homelessness. General active support for self-governing bodies in their efforts to rapidly secure a normal life and to get production going again. Completely unhindered development of free trade and private entrepreneurial initiative on the basis of private property."

A proposal aimed at petty-bourgeois circles and small and medium-sized enterprises.

"Liquidation of the large estates, the large estates of the Junkers, counts and



princes and the transfer of all their land as well as the living and dead inventory to the provincial or state administrations for allocation to the peasants ruined and dispossessed by the war. It goes without saying that these measures will in no way affect the land and the business of large farmers."

A proposal that was aimed at agricultural workers and small farmers but also showed a future even to the non-feudal and non-war criminal larger peasants.

In the second quote, the land reform in the SBZ was already dealt with. However, this was a completely different path than the one taken in the Soviet Union where, immediately after the October Revolution and with the decree on land, the land became social property which was handed over to the peasants for use but not as property. As we have seen above, this had an effect in the entire history of the GDR.

## **10. The aftermath of historical, cultural, social traditions.**

The construction of socialism requires a revolutionary break with capitalist power and property relations and the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machinery.

At the same time, the socialist revolution and the construction of socialism in historical, cultural and many other respects are the abolition and preservation of what has gone before – historical, cultural, social facts, ways of thinking and habits continue to have an effect. They must be changed where possible, but they cannot be negated.

For centuries, most peoples in Asia have been pawns in colonial, imperialist interventions, in conflicts between colonialists and imperialists. Their nations were divided, broken up, bloodily oppressed. Already during feudalism and emerging capitalism, national unity became synonymous with liberation from colonial and imperial oppression.

I was amazed when, at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Pyongyang in the DPRK in 1989, I was repeatedly asked what we would do for the unification of Germany. This was not something that was particularly close to our hearts nor to those of the comrades of the FDJ at that time.

I think it is similar with the liberation of Hong Kong from the yoke of British colonialism. The government of the People's Republic of China went very far in establishing the principle of "one country – two systems" for 50 years. As communists in the FRG and the GDR, we would have seen that as quite the risk as we recognised West Berlin as a trapdoor for sabotage - something which had been described by some imperialists behind closed doors as "the

cheapest atomic bomb".

With regard to the aftermath – simply to illustrate the complexity – I also refer to examples such as the influence of Catholicism in the then People's Republic of Poland or the role of the Protestant Church in the GDR.

## **11. The internal class struggle.**

The rough picture applies here is it does above: the socialist revolution leads to political power of the working class, usually in alliance with other classes or layers which stand in contradiction to capital - during the imperialist stage of capitalism in contradiction to monopoly capital. This power is used to gradually tear away from the capitalist class the source of its previous power - the means of production - and to prevent it from elevating itself again as a ruling class.

Clearly, however, private ownership of the means of production will still exist over longer periods. There is much to suggest that there will be phases in which doors are even opened for capitalists. As long as there are capitalists, then there will be a capitalist class. The class struggle depends on the degree of its formation. The image of riding the tiger under socialism is quite fitting. In concrete terms, this means that the danger of counterrevolution will probably never be eliminated as long as there is private ownership of the means of production or its aftermath in people's consciousness and as long as capitalism/imperialism is relevant on a world scale.

Capitalism produces capitalism. That is why, for this presumably quite extended period, we will have to deal with the fact that capitalist consciousness also arises and reproduces itself within socialist society. On the other hand the class struggle must be waged from above and probably with the means as we know them – i.e. from integration to ideological interference to legal oppression. I think this currently includes campaigns against corruption, such as we are seeing in the various countries of socialist construction.

All of this is extremely risky. And the risk of counterrevolution will at the latest become a reality when it also infects the core, the Communist Party.

## **12. Policy of international alliance.**

Developing socialism is internationally forced to make a policy of alliance. In this it is confronted with the fact that the world is by no means simply black and white. We are dealing with leading imperialist powers that are united in their onslaught against socialism, but which are also in competition with each other and also practise this competition in the same way as they do business

with developing socialism.

We are dealing with capitalist countries that do not or do not yet play in the league of the leading imperialists. We are dealing with capitalist countries suffering from imperialist plunder and oppression. As a rule, there are sections of the national capitalist class that profit more and others less from this situation. We are dealing with countries that still have strong feudal structures or are in the aftermath of these.

There will always be pressure to develop a policy of alliance which has two main things as its goal. Firstly, securing the survival of humanity in which peace and the basics for human living are secured and preserved as far as possible. Secondly, to prevent the permanent aggression of capitalism/imperialism from defeating socialism. This requires flexible policy and diplomacy and it includes the danger that the distinction between flexible policy and diplomacy and the simultaneous necessary consistency in questions of world outlook and ideology becomes blurred.

It has been and still is a problem for communist parties when the difference between the foreign policy of a socialist state and the internationalism of the Communist party becomes obscured.

### **13. The need to preserve peace and natural foundations of life – peaceful coexistence as a form of class struggle.**

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that today the questions of the struggle for peace and the preservation of the natural foundations of life are more acute than in all previous epochs of humanity.

Peaceful coexistence between capitalism/imperialism and socialism is a necessary precondition for the possibility of socialist development. But capitalism/imperialism can only be compelled to peace; it will, due to its internal competitive situation and its (inherently necessary) struggle against socialism, never be able to put aside its aggression. Communists must never forget this fact but they must also not fall into a fatalism of impossibility of forcing it to preserve the perspectives of humanity.

One moment of this struggle is, of course, the military capacity to defend socialism. But another is the economic exchange with imperialism. We have made clear that this can also lead to blackmail. But it is just as bad if, in the struggle for peace, it is forgotten that the struggle for peaceful coexistence is also a form of class struggle. Forgetting this is the ideological disarmament of the Communist Party.

Dear comrades, I have certainly not examined all the points of the complexity of socialist construction. If I have succeeded in stimulating reflection and discussion on this complex topic, then I am satisfied.