

# WHICH CHARACTERISTICS WILL SOCIALISM HAVE DURING THE 21ST CENTURY?

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On behalf of the Central Committee of KKE, I would like to thank you for the honourable invitation and to congratulate you for the theme you chose for your conference, a theme which proves that your Party is constantly striving to play its role as a revolutionary vanguard.

In order to examine the characteristic features of socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must, on the basis of the theoretical principles of Marxism-Leninism, explore, on the one hand, the historical experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, on the other hand, the new objective possibilities and the new problems arising from the scientific and technological progress, under the new conditions of the digital economy and the so-called 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution.

In particular, we must examine, based on the principles of dialectical and historical materialism and the logico-historical method, the contradictions that determine the movement of socialist society. We must examine the process of historical evolution of socialist construction during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We must study the efforts and the degree of conscious utilization by Soviet power of the basic economic law of socialism that is the coordination of all the goals of production towards the all-round satisfaction of societal needs. To examine the extent to which this fundamental law acted as the driving force for the solution of the contradiction between the degree of development of production and the continuous, uninterrupted expansion of societal needs. To examine the degree to which the planned, programmed organization of social production for the securing of the well-being and the free development of all members of society was developed.

Following the counter-revolutionary developments, KKE began during the early 1990's and continues today a serious effort to contribute to the study of this complex and difficult subject.

In today's short talk, we will focus on a few key points.

The victory of the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia demonstrated the liberating nature of socialist relations of production for the development of the productive forces. October of 1917 revealed the superiority of central scientific Planning in the development of the productive forces, on the solid ground of working-class power, of social ownership over the means of produc-



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tion. The elimination of unemployment and illiteracy, the general, compulsory and free education, the eight-hour workday, the real equality of men and women in work and life, the liberation from racial prejudices, the epic conversion of peace-time industry into war industry before and during World War II are some characteristic examples of the first decades of Soviet power, as well as the leap in space exploration later on.

During this particular historic period, the ability of the targeted, centrally-planned direction of social production to obtain an increasingly scientific character and to improve the organization and coordination of the collective efforts of millions of Soviet workers was demonstrated. The need for the implementation of the unified state plan, of the principle of democratic centralism and of the utilization of socialist emulation as a directive method, in order to enhance the effectiveness of central planning of the economy, were confirmed.

In order to understand the significance of these achievements in the Soviet Union we need to think about the historical conditions under which they were accomplished. The conquests of Soviet power were achieved under conditions of imperialist invasion, imperialist encirclement, permanent international threats and an

undermining of production from within. They were achieved under conditions of a great shortage of material assets and of specialist scientific experts, and under the pressure of time to advance the development of sectors of strategic importance in the USSR's competition with the international imperialist system. Moreover, Soviet power quickly bridged the very long gulf that separated pre-revolutionary tsarist Russia from the strong capitalist states, such as the U.S, Britain and Germany.

The leap achieved in the Soviet Union during its first decades proves that, with the expansion of social ownership over the means of production and the scientific central planning of the economy, labor productivity and innovative technological applications in the economy increased dramatically. The purpose and pace of development of the productive forces changed. The working person, the main productive force, was freed from his bonds, since he no longer sought a boss in the jungle of the capitalist market to sell his labor power. A new army of scientists was created from among the children of the working class and of the poor peasants.

Soviet working-class power was founded in the 1920's on the solid ground of the Soviets, the General Assemblies of workers in every workplace, with representatives of the Assembly to the higher organs of power in every branch, representatives that could be revoked by their electors. This was an important step for the effective exercise of working-class power.

The superiority of the central planning of working-class power was demonstrated over the capitalist market, where the monopoly groups plan and compete to secure a higher percentage of profit, a greater share.

Soviet historical experience has also shown that, objectively, the course of socialist construction is not an easy stroll, that it does not proceed smoothly and in a straight line. A number of real problems that arose, such as delays in the technological modernization of industry, with negative consequences for the quality and adequacy of products, were misinterpreted as inherent weaknesses of the socialist relations of production. According to Soviet estimates, the volume of the industrial output of the USSR in the early 1950's was less than one-third of the respective US output, not to speak of the US's military lead in the development of nuclear weapons.

Particularly after World War II, the Soviet Union had to upgrade its production and services on the basis of a new, higher level of social needs. It had to solve this problem under conditions of frightening human war-time losses at the most productive ages.

It was a particularly complex problem, which concerned the assurance of a proportional development of all sectors of production, the qualitative upgrading of popular

consumption products, the priority in the production of means of production, the extension of automation in many sectors of the economy, the necessary steps to ensure that the contradiction between managerial and executive labor is not sharpened.

More generally, it had to do with the ability to ensure the priority in the development of modern means of production over the means of consumption, to maintain the basic proportions of all parts and elements of the economy, to upgrade the quality and efficiency of production, to rapidly apply the new scientific and technical achievements, to raise socialist consciousness and the creative initiative of workers.

At this crucial historical juncture, the solution had to be found looking forward, via the planned expansion of communist relations of production.

Judging by the results, in the 1950s it became apparent that there was no collectively conquered theoretical potential to effectively address these problems.

Serious theoretical discussions and controversies in the fields of philosophy and political economy took place during the historical course of the Soviet Union. The theoretical discussion of the 1927-1929 period on the dialectical relationship and interaction between productive forces and relations of production was important. The debate highlighted the active role of socialist relations of production in the development of the productive forces. The active role of the relations of production is realized through the efforts of working-class power to eliminate the survivals of private property and to orient the development of the productive forces in the direction of the full satisfaction of social needs.

Unfortunately, however, the content of the theoretical debate focused mainly on the need to delineate the scientific subject of political economy from the broader subject of dialectical and historical materialism and did not orient theoretical research towards a deeper understanding on the crucial issue of the interaction between relations of production and the development of the productive forces.

At the same period (1924-1929), the philosophical debate between "dialecticians" and "mechanists" was important in understanding the concept of dialectical contradiction and its role in the development of natural and social phenomena. In the early 1930s the theoretical concept of "non-antagonistic contradictions" had already emerged.

The Soviet philosopher Ilyenkov will later point out that this philosophical approach would have an impact on the discussion of the issues of the political economy of socialism, on the need to clearly delimit commodity-money relations as an element foreign to Central

Planning. Instead of a decisive struggle for the abolition of the market and commodity economy, the perception regarding the possibility of diffusion, limited integration and utilization of the functions of the market by the central planning of working-class power will gradually prevail.

In the 1950s Stalin will summarize this controversy in his work *"The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR"*. In conclusion, there was a theoretical debate within the Bolshevik Party, in which the revolutionary forces struggled against the supporters of the market. But the steps towards developing the Marxist political economy of socialism were insufficient to confront the problems relating to the prioritization of social needs and the effective planning for their satisfaction. They were insufficient to be able to formulate clear directions, methods and indicators for calculating and evaluating the development and performance of socialist industry and agricultural production, in light of the expanding social needs and the new demands of socialized production.

Of course, the difficulty in overcoming theoretical deficiencies, as well as the ideological conflict within the CPSU and the rest of the communist parties, had as its background the existence of different social forces, different material interests within the socialist countries.

In many socialist countries private ownership of agricultural production had not yet been abolished. Not even the right to hire labor had been completely abolished. In the Soviet Union itself, in addition to maintaining the collective ownership of the kolkhozes in the agricultural sector, a weakening of workers' participation and control and the maintenance of income differences took place. The contradiction between managerial and executive labor increased.

After the war, and especially after the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, the road towards the counter-revolutionary overthrow, towards a backtracking in the course of History was opened. The economic discussions of 1960 will be dominated by the opportunistic views of "market socialism", whose result was the Kosygin economic reform of 1965.

During the same period, the Marxist-Leninist conception of the workers' state was revised. The 22nd Congress of the CPSU (1961) characterized the USSR as a "state of the whole people" and the CPSU as a «party of the whole people».

Rather than seeking solutions in a forward direction, towards an expansion and deepening of the socialist relations of production, solutions were sought backwards, using the tools and relations of production of capitalism. The central management of the planned economy was weakened. Each individual production unit inde-

pendently set its own efficiency goals, essentially fragmenting the overall goals of social production. Market and commodity production regained ground; income inequalities increased, individual and group ownership were strengthened, particularly in the agricultural sector.

The counter-revolution would not have won had there been a timely collective theoretical and political preparation to respond to the difficult problems posed by the new level of development of social production.

Both the positive and the negative historical experience of the 20th century, following the victory of the October Socialist Revolution of 1917, demonstrate the liberating role of the socialist relations of production in the development of the productive forces, with the goal of satisfying the needs of society.

The historical course, from the victory of the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 until the victory of the counter-revolution and the overthrows of the early 1990s, highlights and underlines the importance of the creative application of the Leninist principles of socialist construction.

It is a valuable historical experience that illuminates, on the one hand, the beneficial results that can be achieved when the revolutionary vanguard is aware and properly utilizes the laws of socialist construction and, on the other, the devastating negative consequences when this is not the case, due to collective theoretical and political inadequacies and the victory of opportunist perceptions in the Communist Party, under the pressure of a negative correlation of forces and of major difficulties that may arise.

It also demonstrates the objective constraints and difficulties in the efforts of a planned direction of the economy, as necessitated by the level of development of the productive forces, of technical progress and of labor productivity at any given point.

Very briefly, what has the experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century taught us?

It has generally confirmed that socialist construction is not an easy, straightforward progressive course and that it includes the risk of a backlash. It has confirmed a number of interrelated basic terms and pre-conditions that determine the outcome of this difficult task. More specifically:

1) It has confirmed the importance of a consistent, steadfast orientation of the Communist Party and of working-class power towards the expansion and complete domination of social property, of socialist relations of production and the elimination of all forms of individual and group commodity production. It has

highlighted the historical bankruptcy of «market socialism» as a transition path from the immature to the mature stage of communism.

Maintaining a revolutionary orientation in socialist construction requires the theoretical understanding that the law of value is not a law of socialist economy, that it cannot regulate its proportions. It requires the theoretical understanding that as long as commodity-money relations are maintained, there exists the danger of a reinforcement of counter-revolutionary social forces. The effect of the law of value on economic life is in contradiction with Central Planning and must be decisively overcome through the planned conversion of all production into direct social production.

Limiting the impact of the law of value through certain measures of the socialist state, such as price and production plan delimitations, is not a radical, substantive solution towards the long-term handling of the risk of an undermining of working-class power.

2) Experience has also highlighted the crucial importance of the central planning's effort for the scientific upgrading and the creative, continuous adaptation of Central Planning to the new requirements that are set by the new level of development of social production.

Central Planning is a social relation, determined by the social ownership over the means of production. It expresses the radically different way that workers are united with the means of production, without market intermediation. It enables workers' control over what will be produced, how it will be produced, how it will be distributed to the various sectors of production.

It faces objective constraints, since the level of development of the productive forces at each point in time does not allow access, to the same degree, to the entire social product based on the principle of needs, nor does it permit a direct overcoming of the contradiction between managerial and executive labor, and in general of the contradiction between intellectual and manual labor.

Under the pressure of objective difficulties, of different social material interests, and of theoretical, scientific inadequacies, there is always the risk of making serious subjective mistakes in the plan, regarding the targets of production, the priorities for a proportionate development of the sectors of production, the training and specialization of the workforce and the attempt to abolish class differentiation.

3) The historical experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century revealed the irreplaceable role of the dictatorship of the proletariat in socialist construction, as well as the historical bankruptcy of the opportunist conception of the "state of the whole people".

Soviet experience, in both its upward course and in its retreat, has shown that the dictatorship of the proletariat can fulfill its mission only when it relies on the mobilization of the workers, so that the directions and goals are actively and militantly adopted by the broad popular masses.

That is why it is crucial that its organs, from the lower level up to the central organs of power, function in a substantive way, rather than formally. That the General Assembly in every workplace works effectively, that is, on the basis of the principles of control, accountability, and recall of elected representatives at the highest levels of authority. Substantive electoral rights can be established in this manner, as opposed to the formal electoral rights, the formal equality of bourgeois democracy, of the dictatorship of capital.

This function can safeguard the path of socialist construction from subjective mistakes and deviations in the design and implementation of the plan at any given moment, in the context of Central Planning.

This danger underlines the role that the revolutionary power of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat, must play. The strengthening of communist relations of production presupposes the conscious action of the workers. A higher form of democracy is required, with the active involvement of workers in the adoption, implementation and control of decisions. The conversion of the workplace into the organization nucleus of workers' power is a central element of this higher quality of democracy. But, with the victory of the revolution socialist consciousness is not fully entrenched in the people. This is why the vanguard intervention of the Communist Party plays a decisive role.

The Communist Party represents the leading nucleus of the revolutionary workers' power, since it is the only force that can act consciously, according to the laws of motion of the socialist-communist society. That is why it must be capable, in all circumstances, of leading the working class to achieve its historical mission.

The socialist state, as an instrument of the class struggle that continues with new forms and under new conditions, must play both its defensive - repressive role and its creative, economic and cultural function.

The workers' state, as a mechanism of political domination, is necessary until the transformation of all social relations into communist ones, until the formation of communist consciousness among the vast majority of workers, and until the prevalence of socialist relations of production in the largest part of the world.

4) Soviet experience has shown that for the above conditions to be fulfilled the Communist Party must maintain the capacity to formulate its policy in a scientific



Makis Papadopoulos, during his speech.

and class manner. In other words, the Communist Party must constantly reaffirm its role as the carrier of the dialectical unity of revolutionary theory and practice. It must contribute to the creative development of the Marxist-Leninist worldview, as the object that the theory studies - life in all its forms - is developing. Not to treat theory as a religious collection of dogmas and positions, detached from historical time. Creative development is necessary in the face of the opportunist revision of theoretical principles and laws illuminated by the Marxist worldview. Let us not forget that theoretical revision is most often attempted under the false pretense of confronting new complex problems and phenomena.

The creative development of theory is certainly a difficult task. Theoretical research on the laws and evolution of the structure of the economy of socialism has particular objective difficulties, when compared to the Marxist theoretical formulation of the political economy of capitalism.

Let us keep in mind that when Marx was researching the laws and functioning of the capitalist economy, centuries had passed since the emergence of capitalist production within the womb of feudal society. Capitalist relations made their first appearance as far back as the 16th century. At the end of the 16th century we had the first capitalist state in the Netherlands and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the bourgeois revolution in England. At the end of the 18th century, the capitalist mode of production prevailed in Western Europe with the victory of the French Revolution.

Marx and Engels studied the capitalist system, as an object of knowledge, at a period when it existed at a relatively mature, advanced state, when one could define scientifically all the conditions really necessary for the emergence and development of capitalism, the internal and essential processes of its development, as opposed to random historical events and its particular, specific historical forms. Marx and Engels discussed, utilized, and overturned Smith's and Ricardo's bourgeois theoretical studies that had preceded them.

Lenin's attempt at formulating the Marxist political

economy of socialism began with limited supplies: the Marxist political economy of capitalism, the theoretical principles and the method of dialectical and historical materialism.

He had to deal with a major objective problem, which was later highlighted in the related discussions of Soviet philosophical thought (Ilyenkov, Vaziulin, etc.). He could only study in a concrete way the beginnings of the emergence of socialist relations of production following the socialist revolution in Russia. He could only study the foundations of the new mode of production, socialism. At the same time, he had the task of uncovering the laws and of foreseeing the key issues that the attempt at socialist construction would have to face in the future, under international conditions where the role of capitalist relations of production remained powerful and decisive.

In other words, theoretical research could focus in a specific way only on the immature state (of the new mode of production), while the Marxist political economy of capitalism looked at the mature period, when the capitalist relations of production were already dominant and played a decisive role in the process of world development.

This greater difficulty in the theoretical investigation of the course of socialist construction, compared to the study of the capitalist mode of production, is objective because, unlike the bourgeois revolution that finds the forms of capitalist relations ready, working-class power does not inherit already formed relations of production. The socialist-communist relations of social property only emerge as a result of the revolutionary political acts of working-class power. The theoretical research that must support at any given time the revolutionary practice, in order to shape, expand and deepen the new social relations of production, has as a primary object of study something which is just being born. This objective difficulty may facilitate the domination of empiricism, the "trial and error" method of positivist approaches, if there is no theoretical vigilance and collective readiness.



However, today we Communists have more opportunities and responsibilities because we can study the historical experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We can study and investigate the problems of the political economy of socialism by looking at the historical course of decades.

At the same time we can take advantage for socialist construction of the new great objective possibilities created by the modern era of the digital economy and the “4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution”.

It is worthwhile to see how many technical and scientific constraints for the success of central planning and the deepening of socialist relations of production that existed in Russia of 1917 and in the Soviet Union of the 1950s do not exist today.

Think of the opportunities that the increase of labor productivity gives today to increase leisure time and enhance the creative content of labor for the workers who are the main productive force in every epoch.

Here we must also take into account the army of salaried scientists who objectively belong to or approach the modern working class, an army that did not exist in October of 1917.

Think of new possibilities for scientific planning, the possibility to make quick and optimal decisions on complex problems, utilizing the modern capabilities to quickly collect and intensively process large volumes of data and information relevant to the totality of society's needs.

Think of the new technological and scientific possibilities to ensure not only the adequacy of products, but also their improved quality, of the new capabilities to rapidly improve and control production, of the new capabilities to prevent and confront “major” industrial accidents that are posing a risk for thousands of people.

Another aspect concerns the new possibilities for interdisciplinary research, which will be free from the chains of market competition, from the aim of safeguarding capitalist profit. This is the ability of interdisciplinary research to predict in a timely and accurate way future societal needs and to identify priorities for the economy.

Let us also consider, within the framework of socialist construction, the impetus that the creative development of Marxism can give to modern research and, in general, to the process of knowledge.

The progress of Marxist scientific research in all scientific disciplines and interdisciplinary cooperation will contribute to the improvement of the scientific documentation of the specific five-year plans for the planned development of socialist economy. Barriers of an epistemological nature that hinder the full correspondence

of planning to the demands of the laws of socialist construction will be overcome.

Scientific progress will help to determine more precisely the quantitative ratios required to maintain proportionate growth between the key sectors of the economy and between regions of a country, as well as issues of division of labor between states, in case it is a group of countries that will march again on the path of socialist construction.

Of course, along with the emergence of new opportunities, there are already emerging new problems created by these changes in production, in the content of many specific labor tasks and, of course, in the corresponding content of education.

Confronted by the new major problems arising from the new era of the 4th industrial revolution, the necessity and historical timeliness of socialism are further highlighted, for it is only working-class power that can provide consistent answers to these problems from the perspective of social well-being.

Socialism can respond to the necessary changes in the content of labor, to the necessary movements of workers to new tasks and objects of labour, to new sectors, without the workers being at risk and living in fear of becoming unemployed, uninsured, without medical care, as it happens under capitalism.

Under conditions of social ownership, central planning, unlike the jungle of the market, can determine and change, in a scientific and planned manner, the distribution of the labor and scientific force and of the means of production in the entire country, in each region, in every sector.

Socialism can ensure the necessary continuous specialization and retraining, the upgrading of workers' knowledge and labor skills. It can unlock, unleash their creative abilities, because it collectively brings them to the forefront of historical development for social liberation. It can harness the power of collective effort, the impetus of socialist emulation.

All of the above highlight the important study and research tasks for the creative development of Marxism-Leninism that we have before us in order to act effectively as a revolutionary vanguard in the 21st century. Our parties, KKE and the Communist Party of Turkey, cooperate decisively and creatively in this direction. The power of the working class to get to know and change the world, its power to fulfill its historical mission and to lead in the revolutionary struggle for socialism - communism will be reaffirmed.