

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
116 University Place
New York 3, N.Y.

April 4, 1950

Pittsburgh

Dear Freddie:

Thank you for the comprehensive minutes on the Youngstown meeting.

See enclosed letter which contains our reply to the request for Bert to visit Morgantown. We hope Bert will be able to make it.

After consideration, we thought it inadvisable to publish your contrast between Murray and Lewis' policies on relief and the solidarity exhibited by the ranks. Presented in this form, it might give a wrong impression of the entire situation and our appraisal of it. Unquestionably there was considerable theatrical gesturing, maneuvering and fakery by the heads of both Internationals. But, as you yourself remarked in the Youngstown discussion, there is more involved. Both Murray and Lewis were under heavy pressure from their ranks and are likewise seeking support for their own bureaucratic interests. This is the positive element in their move which we have sought to bring forward and utilize for our own progressive aims.

Even from the purely formal standpoint, the fact that Lewis made his offer of help as a loan cannot be made an important point of criticism. If I remember rightly, the original organizing funds for the CIO were likewise made by the UMW in the form of loans, which were not of course repaid, and were possibly not expected to be repaid.

The indignation of the miners that they were thereby cheated out of real relief is perfectly understandable. However, despite the success and the significance of the relief action of the ranks, we must recognize that under present conditions that was exceptional. Unity and solidarity in struggle will have to be promoted by exerting greater pressure upon the union leaders rather than by direct

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Dear J:

Although there is nothing urgent about the enclosed, I am mailing it special delivery because I am so elated that I am able to send you anything at all; I had begun to think that I would never be able to exercise the form of Bernardo from the form of value. So, rough as it is, accept it for what it is worth, and let Grace forgive my the extreme philosophic vulgarities I must have vented forth.

I agree with you completely on the interrelationship--and hence not an immediate relationship--between Marx's conceptual development and the developing class struggle. If I insist on writing it down rather loosely nevertheless, it is not merely because this is how I began seeing things, but also because there is there a connection we have not fully worked out, and which must be done more concrete fashion than heretofore. These, then, are mere notations for further consideration.

However, dear Brother, if you want me to convince me on any point, don't quote Engels to me. He has replaced Luxemburg as my chief "enemy". That does not mean that I propose that we begin to attack him, or even footnote our discoveries, since no purpose whatever would be served thereby. But it does mean that for ourselves we must be very clear that Engels throughout the period of his most mature work in economics, the period 1850-1870, contributed not a single idea. The collaboration between the two had not merely stopped because one was in London and the other in Manchester, but because in economics Engels did not advance much beyond the 1840s which was a true period of collaboration. Moreover, not only are the ideas fully Marx's, worked out by himself alone, but even after they had been worked out, Engels did not fully grasp or keep up with the leap. When Marx finishes Capital, Engels writes that as great as it is there are points in which he prefers the presentation in the Critique! It is not by accident that Engels leaves out the seemingly unimportant word "Forms" of the process as a whole in his titling of Volume III. Neither is it an accident that he writes that thoroughly Kautskyan superficial little piece on value existing in all societies, upon which Leontiev grasped with such glee. Forgive the outburst, but ever since 1943 when I had to tackle Leontiev and the Stalinist latest revision I've been keeping within me a "grudge". Perhaps, if only from the personal viewpoint, I should be softer on Engels. For think what history will do to poor me when they get the Johnson-Forest untangled and see how little I stacked up. But the historic justice which will revel in pouring its venom on me, gives me the right to pour mine on Engels.

One further word on Marx and his leap. It is true that in a letter to Engels (6/22/67) he gives the impression that he deliberately had two forms of presentation, and that in the Critique he merely "avoided the difficulty of the development by giving an actual analysis of the expression of value when it appears already developed and expressed in money." But the text of Capital itself makes it not only perfectly clear that any but that interpretation was not a mere question of "avoiding" the difficulty as not seeing it at all, but he is absolutely merciless with his past interpretations, and often simply calls them bourgeois, etc. etc. But when Engels speaks of concepts being the same in Marx in 1843 and 1873, well--haven't I said enough.

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Sun. June 25, 1950

Dear Com. Warde:

El told me about your phone conversation, and we then decided that she and Betty and Ernest try to get to some of our miners' contacts in Pennsylvania who are Slav, while John and I go to W. Va., where there would also be some comrades from Ohio who had been invited to the party that the W. Va. were putting on. This is a report of the W. Va. outing.

Both at the party Sat., where Sam had spoken of the SWP work during the miners strike as well as the political principles of the party, and at discussions Sunday morning, I was able to present the party position on Yugoslavia. There were about 35 people present, some of whom were various kinds of Slavs, and all of whom showed interest. In one case, of which I'll speak below, we're getting indirect contacts also with Donora, Pa., where there seems to be two Croatian clubs.

The immediate result so far as the youth brigade is concerned is our own comrade Andy who is in all ways perfect for the brigade, if he can manage to get a leave from the mines. For one thing, he is a Slav (a Czech for whom the Croatian language would be easy to pick up in a couple of weeks). Then he is a miner and holds the position of president of his local. He is a youth and very willing to go. He said he felt the union would understand, but his particular mine does happen to run full time, and the boss would have to be given a damned good excuse before he'd allow the prolonged absence. After careful discussion, it was decided that since he is (or was) also a college student and since it is not out of the question that the boss would consider such a sabbatical leave of use to him later on, that he should say he is working on his master's thesis on labor conditions in Yugoslavia and is asking for the summer to complete it. In any case, the comrades in W. Va. will work that out. If they succeed, then all is set, except of course that he has no money at all. I need hardly emphasize that a 9 months strike does not leave one ~~in~~ any abundance of greenbacks. We feel however that both from the union, youth, and other points of view he fits the bill, and hence if any are going free (which El said was true) he should get preference. Mike's special with the forms to fill out came in time, and he is filling it out and sending it in to Mike today. Now there is also a question of passport and of that El was not clear whether he goes about doing it here (that is W. Va.) on his own, or whether you do it from NY. Please inform him air-mail-special. The standard address at Lorentz Ave. will get him promptly.

Now the contact. His name is Anton Tarley (Box 143, Four State, W. Va.), a man of 50, a miner, who has been an SFor, CPar (he thinks Lenin was the greatest of them all) and is now against Stalin and for Tito, but has not read any of the material. I told him a Novy List would be sent him, and since this week is his vacation and he is going to Donora he would be able to present the question to those clubs. (He does not know where they stand, but he says they are sure to be highly political and be either for or against as there are no neutrals there.) He will also ask whether they would care to hear a speaker from the Friends of New Yugoslavia. Originally I told him we would get him one here, and one of us could present the problem. But

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in rethinking it on the drive back to Pittsburgh I thought it would be best if the first letter in any case was sent directly from NY since there you have more information. You merely have to mention that that is as a follow-up of the talk he had with me (FF of the SWP whom he met at Jim's in Everettville), but please do this immediately since the miners' vacation begins the end of this month and there is not another such chance for another year.

Now this Anton who is true old Bolshevik type has a whole family; the young daughter (17) and son (20) were there entertaining us by playing Slavic airs on guitars, but when I asked would he let them go in this youth brigade, he said not unless he could go too, and he doubts he could go (financially and job) although he would love to. ^{whether} The children are not at all like Dad, not political and I doubt very much interested. But I feel sure that once they got the Navy List or rather Anton got it, he would explain this more. In any case, he is the key figure to many Slavs in the Donora region, and when presented with all the material, would see to spread the word. (Incidentally, as a measure of the man, he contributed \$5 to the party as the only workingmen's party in the region.)

Please send us a copy of the letter you sent to him, and also tell us what material you sent him. If you feel to send some one from NY is too much, why mention us in the letter and if he can get the speaking date we'll be there as Donora is not far away. It all must be done in the period of the 10 days miners' vacation.

Comradely,

One other possibility is one Mike who used to be a member. He has moved away, we're not sure in which political direction, originally or allegedly because not every one was a miner which he said he felt a serious party branch should be. In any case, he became a president of an important union local in that region, very active during the strike and indirectly collaborated with us all along, but always very careful that it be indirect. He is a Yugoslav, a good speaker, and of all things studying law. He did not appear at the party, as he has not appeared at any others. All in the union consider him leftist however and trust him, but some exhibited definite pro-Stalinist (Wallacite tendency) leanings. Marvin who had the longest conversation with him thought Mike might also be. At the same time Marvin felt that ~~if~~ even so nothing would be lost and much was to be gained if he could be won over to the idea of joining this youth brigade. I asked the local comrades to get a hold of him and speak to him, and I will have El write him. But I feel that in this or it would not be wise for the office to make a direct approach.

October 30, 1950

Dear J:

Yesterday we had our second (and I believe last) discussion at Youngstown, and the air got considerably hotter. For one thing it was a more representative party assembly than here since the whole Youngstown branch and Cleveland were there, and had such stalwarts as Harry (the organizer), Sam whom you heard at camp, Ted Selander, Ted D. (who has taken the Cochran-Hansen-IEC position one step forward and declares China too to be a workers state, which he deduces from the fact that ~~since~~ there are only two fundamental classes ~~and~~ in society, and since the bourgeoisie (Chiang) has been destroyed and the petty bourgeoisie (peasantry) cannot rule, the workers do!) and a Wrightite who goes a step forward (everything in the provinces is taken a step beyond) and says the position that Yugoslavia is a workers state is revisionist and liquidationist, but still all power ~~is~~ and support to Tito.

It was held as full-fledged debate and lasted nearly all day. I took my cue from your speech in N.Y. and hit out at what they are doing to the conception of the party as a historically necessary instrument in the struggle against Stalinism. The speech hurt so that in the last rebuttal Harry took his jacket off (literally and figuratively) and went hammer and tongs in the old type of factional debate, saying that our document was not only a "mishmash" such as he had never seen but is its "confusions" and "slanders" contained "even garbage". He then launched into the hottest defense of Fablo; we had nerve to call him a pro-Stalinist when "You are talking about one who was fighting Stalinism in concentration camps". He didn't agree with Fablo about "centuries" but, after all, it was only a "time element" (!) and surely the transition from ~~capitalism to socialism~~ the workers state to socialism was not a matter of "weeks" but a long, long period. As for Marxism our document (and I in "rapid-fire language" need not act as if they were infants in Marxism. It is we who are giving "new definitions of capitalism" and introducing "the purely subjective factor of voluntarism or involuntarism" of the relation of the worker to the mode of production. Did we think the pure workers state of Lenin and Trotsky didn't use force? "The railroad workers worked at the point of a bayonet" and we wouldn't hesitate today to do the same to save the revolution." The truth was Marx always explained private property to be capitalism. Of course, "some" laws of capitalism function not only during the workers dictatorship, but also under socialism. These are: (1) Law of value--"certainly it functions and will continue to do so." (2) Law of surplus value--"we hope it will continue to do so." (3) Decline in the rate of profit--"functions not only under dictatorship but under socialism as well, but the consequences are not the same." The real new situation that came out of this was that Stalinism, far from becoming smaller, has become larger; we who hoped to become mass movements, remain small. The new situation then is that Stalinism's "new role--its collaboration with tremendous mass movements." Don't scare us with talk of liquidationism--of course we should enter these types of CPS "wherever we can". That doesn't mean we're giving up our program any more than we did when we entered the SPs. Johnsonism would mean "abstention from the class struggle". And at the same time

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he also said that although he had listened to all sorts of sects "spontaneists, Luxemburgists" (and some one from the floor helped with "anarchists") my talk on the creative energies ~~was~~ and spontaneous movements of the masses was unmatched.

I was a little worried about the tone of his speech or rather rebuttal since no such note was sounded either in the last meet or in the presentations; none was sounded on our side (John spoke on Yugoslavia, and Frank made an excellent speech on why we say the logic of Pabloism is liquidationism) and the mingling with the members was very free and easy during intermission for lunch. I asked Frank what he thought and he said that my speech had really made an impression as he could see since he sat in the audience, and he felt that Harry had grown a bit panicky. Since I had no other rebuttal, I made it my business to repeat both to Harry and saw that a majority ~~was~~ heard that this on our part was not ~~xxxxxxx~~ the old-fashioned type of factional struggle; we looked for no votes, etc. etc. and then asked everybody to read the top of p.2 of our document on what binds us to all ~~its~~ tendencies. (During my speech incidentally Ted S. interrupted with and laid stress on the fact that I said we remain faithful to traditions of Bolshevism, whereas Harry in his rebuttal said the loose talk of liquidationism of such as Pablo reminded him of all the dire prophecies of others that following Bolshevism meant ending in Stalinism, whereas none of the Trotskyist parties ever went over to Stalinism, whereas an ex-Stalinist party--Tito--is coming toward 4th.) So we parted in friendly mood all over again.

Now in driving back with Betty and Ernest, to whom I have never spoken; more than that, all attempts of Betty who is on exec. to make me talk "Johnsonism" to her has made me not only be mum but insist that only what is in the document can they read and I will only when in formal debate, etc. etc. Nevertheless, she could not this time contain herself any longer. She said I spoke "very fine"; that when El was leaving she had called her in and said "Now you and Ernest are the only ones with the party position; preserve it", but that ever since she read our document, she wasn't sure she had the party position. I said, "Betty I didn't hear a word you said, and I don't intend to." But she continued to say that a miner's wife near her was so moved by my talk (and even rebuttal which wasn't as well delivered as presentation) that she refused to leave the hall to cough or to cough there, with the evident result that when I finished and she left, she had a terrible attack but she returned. Then she said Ted. S. said to her "El told me you had the party position." She had answered "I had not at that time read or heard a word of the J-F Minority." I emphasized we would take no votes on our document, and ~~have~~ send ~~our~~ delegates as uninstructed ones. When I finally managed to change the conversation, Ernest who had said nothing except that he is confused, said "What is it that happened to the railroad workers under Trotsky?" I believe he was ~~genuinely~~ genuinely scared by Harry's conception of bayonets and "we would do the same today."

Enuf!



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In the case of the Narodniks who first labored to "prove" that the Russian agricultural economy could be transformed into a socialist economy without going through the disintegration of capitalism, we had the first theory of exceptionalism. Lenin saw to it that it remained outside of the Marxist movement. In the case of his antagonists within the Marxist movement, the Mensheviks (with whom we must include Trotsky as well as Martov) Lenin found it easy to present the school of the bourgeoisie (factory) against the proletarian "school" of the bourgeoisie as the training ground for the 1905 revolution. As for the SRs, it was not the program of agriculture, but the how of the agricultural revolution that brought the division; Lenin presented "no more" to the peasantry than the SR program but he denounced the how of it. In its least strata, to get it for themselves by means of a counter-revolution. What I am trying to say is that because what was on the order of the hour was a bourgeois revolution the counter-revolution within the revolution could not have fastened. As you so often rightly emphasize over and over again only the appearance of the how changed Lenin's concept of bourgeois revolution. But once the proletariat wanted itself to try, just as when the Parisian workers decided "Water is the answer", that the reconstruction of society would take on a matter of the creativity of the proletariat, and all other problems changed. And so did the face of the counter-revolution.

Now the 1920-23 period is an entirely different epoch. Once the proletariat failed, the logical development of capitalism had to continue to its logical conclusion; the divergence of capitalism was over; a "return" to plan, that is theory got an objective basis and became its opposite, if over plan was anything else. But Trotsky's economic are harder to find, because off and on, they are also collaborators. It is true of Bukharin, it is true of the Democratic Centralists and it is logically also true of Stalin. (Incidentally--not in the sense of incidence but in the sense of something to be worked out fully at another time--I am changing my mind about Trotsky's being the Left Opposition. I am rereading the economic debates between Piatakov and Bukharin before the plan; it is clear Bukharin's reaching socialism by "tertium daco" was not "Right" wing via Trotsky-Piatakov's plan; but an attempt not to regiment the workers if it were possible to continue the division between economics and politics. If, in other words, by sheer political power and "control" of the economic heights it was possible, then let's not worry; we can reach socialism by tertium daco.) Once, however, the objective development did not permit for the division between politics and economics, then it was an unavoidable logical for him to have ended with the author of "socialism in one country" as it was, in a previous stage, for him to have ended with up with Trotsky in the trade-union debate. If the creativity of the proletariat is not real, the administration will support himself, whether it be to run the state "as" the proletariat or as the state. And in the relative forces will run it for itself--capitalism. For the state which contains politics and economics, which is not proletarian, can be either Fascist as in the epoch of private-property capitalism, or Stalinist, as in epoch of state capitalism.

Stalinism tries to level with Socialism when it gets this objective basis and turns into its opposite, counter-revolution, but, as we know, the theory of state property holds Trotsky as much prisoner as the theory of Bukharin held Martov prisoner although he did not "betray" and was in the revolution and remained with the Soviet state in its very early years, he just had to leave for Berlin. If Bukharin should "just have to leave".... But that is not the problem here.

The important problem is to trace the development of capitalism itself when it reaches its contradictory, nay, opposite stage of state-capitalism. For that contradiction in terms, as you put it, is essentially a form of self-destruction of the system which is its self-destruction.

That the "back", that is, the logical end, of capitalism is its own self-destruction is made clear for it in manifold forms, whether it be in the decline in the rate of profit and insufficient capital for world development along value lines, or in the single discovery of atom splitting which is embodied in a bomb. The point is when destruction starts it in the face, capitalism tries to scrape its end through the Marshall Plan or Point Four or Korean "police action"; Or Stalinism says to it: my facts, state property and counter-revolution right within the revolution, out of the ranks of the proletariat itself. Counter-revolution as an outside force, the lumpen proletariat and petty bourgeoisie organized by Hitler, has failed. But counter-revolution as an internal force, through the proletariat elite, administrators, organizers, well, my plan is succeeding "better". At this stage dialectics can no longer be a personal matter for it is not merely that one thing can be "transformed" into its opposite; it is that it and its opposite having become enmeshed must be unmeshed and only proletarian socialist revolution can do that.

At this stage of my notes I met Grace and she felt that the section about the logical development of this stage of capitalism being its own self-destruction was of some suggestive help in the rewriting of the philosophic section of our document. So then plunked ourselves down with your letter and very slowly, very concretely, (not to speak about very noticeably carrying out whole sections in full from your letter) went through the entire section. She has taken the result with her to NY where she will further rework and retype.

Then I discussed these points with Freddie and Lynn, and Lynn especially made some very valid points. He said that unless I not only trace the self-destruction of capital, but also the self-destruction of this stage of capitalism destroying a section of the proletariat along with it, I will not have succeeded materially in showing how the counter-revolution came out of the revolution; or the counter-revolutionary proletariat elite out of the proletariat. Well, it is just notes; we'll see.

John is due to return from Cape Cod in a couple of days; then we'll spend another day with Lynn and Freddie, who is getting better in the quiet of Northport harbor. How are you and Corrie? In Hobbs' flourishing in the "wilderness"? Best,

October 20, 1960

Dear J:

May I talk to you? I mean I prefer to do that informally even if it take the form of a letter rather than a more or less formal rewriting of the MS on form. In this case I can ask questions, state my problem, and generally not commit myself. You say to leave the historical matter altogether, to forget about oppositions, scholars, details, etc. and write brutally in the manner of our pp.4-5 of the Bulletin, which has comprised our entire thesis into 6 simple but absolutely devastating points. Now that just doesn't seem to be very easy to do with Marx if it ever did with state-capitalism. Let me put it this way. Commodity-form means all the following things at once:

- (1) material body of value
- (2) phenomenal form of bourgeois wealth
- (3) immediate form of the unity of opposites, value and use-value
- (4) universal concrete form of capitalist production
- (5) the fantastic but nevertheless real form in which relations of persons appear as relations of things
- (6) this inverted form arises in production where concrete labor is transformed into its opposite, abstract labor, but manifests itself only in exchange
- (7) the fetishism of the commodity-form which arises from the very form of a product of labor assumes in capitalist society pervades everything so that even living labor seems detachable from the living person since it "takes on the form of a commodity", labor power, when it is in the market, and "takes on the form" of a component part of capital, variable capital, in the process of production, is but a means to the creation of all value and yet is the constant and only producer of surplus value, yet has no direct manner of expression or connection with labor process, but rather seems to be brought into it by another form, means of consumption, or wages, by means of which irrational form it is bought into the factory on equal terms, only to be entirely subjected to the master, another product of labor it created, means of production, which sucks it dry.

Now nothing, absolutely nothing, can tear off this fetishism. Neither the discovery of labor as the source of value. Nor the hatred of the living labor subjected or an outsider who sees the living labor subjected and can "prove". Nor the awareness that is consciousness that class relations are involved in this exchange of things. The sole exception is freely associated men planning their own production directly and not by indirection, and even then, only when this plan is not an abstraction but is being put into practice.

In the Critique Marx merely assumed that class relations were hidden in this exchange of things. I don't mean that he couldn't and didn't prove it was so but from history and from the development of exchange. I mean assumed in the sense that having "known" that was so, the mystification of the commodity-form appeared simple, and instead of probing why this fantastic form he proceeded to draw conclusions on the basis of history of class

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struggles plus exchange, and not on the basis of the active opposition between abstract and concrete labor in the labor process itself. The reflection of this opposition in the commodity-form was treated intellectually, idealistically, as if it directly expressed precisely what it does not directly express. Both the elimination of the individuality of the laborer and the creation of the constantly-changing, gags, socially-necessary labor time, were treated passively, so that ratios and proportions and disproportions and "universal" labor time became the subject of the analysis, while both the revolting worker and the revolting method of production (or rather revolt or contradiction between method and aim) were in the back of the mind only, in reality only footnoted, or kept separate from the economics; the class struggle was politics.

Now in CAPITAL, on the contrary, where the subject becomes the labor process itself, the concrete laborer so revolts against the capitalistic transformation of his individual labor into social labor that everything, EVERYTHING is a form of the enemy: Cooperation is because by the time the laborers become cooperators they are no more than component parts of the capitalist's capital. Manufacture is because the division of labor transforms the whole worker into a detail laborer. Machinofecture is both because it transforms the worker into an appendage of a machine, degrades and torments him, and also because that wonderful order in the factory is after all not a real social plan, but only ideally it is Plan where in reality it is once again authority of the capitalist. All this opposition which is not heard because the voice of the laborer is stifled in the labor process and the capitalist demands that he stick to his part of the bargain--free and equal exchange--gathers up its forces and revolts openly, totally against the commodity-form. In the process of revolt it also reconstructs shows the absolute opposite to that form, whether you call it freely-associated men as Capital does, or the Commune as the political works call it, or Soviets as the Russian workers named it. What I try to express in that last sentence is what appeared only in the second edition of Capital; in the first edition he made this tremendous leap from the simplicity of fetishism to its actual complex overbearing oppressiveness, but he attached the fetishism to the equivalent form where it was most striking. By the second edition, he said to hell with the equivalent form and its striking appearance; it is the form itself that is the real enemy and I have its direct opposite; there is to be no separation between political and economics for exchange is the politics of the economics of the labor process, and we must destroy it at its very root, the commodity form itself. We can easily leave out the Commune and whether that directly affected him; the result would be the same; the complete victory of Marx of CAPITAL over Marx of the CRITIQUE is contained in the analysis of the fetishism of commodities.

But we have skipped to the fetishism without going ~~with~~ through all the mediating movements; there is not only the two-fold character of commodities and that of labor; there is also the form of value itself; the contradictions are in the method of production as well as in the production relations. Again, form here means many things at once. The Form of value is:

- (1) phenomenal expression of value
- (2) independent form of exchange when exchange having;

reached a form of its own, is so dizzy-from-success that it lives in a world of its own full of nothing but money.

(3) form of the unity of opposites—its relative and equivalent forms and any balance it has is due only to retaining the opposites in their polar extremes.

(4) the form in which other opposites are expressed, thus (a) use value is form of manifestation of its opposite, value; (b) concrete labor that of abstract labor; and (c) individual labor takes the form of its opposite, social labor.

Here there are two other fundamental contradictions for the universal, equivalent form of exchange, money, is a mediator which appears as a completed economic relation because it holds the opposites together and while it is not the true economic relationship it is a necessity which arises from the opposition of use and exchange value.

In the CRITIQUE Marx sees the mediation and its hypostatization as well as the necessity for that form. What he doesn't see is that that form arises not only from the opposition of use-value and value, but from the opposition within value. In CAPITAL on the other hand having probed deep beneath this business of "taking the form of its opposite" he came up with the fact that the fetishism arises from the form itself as is seen by: (a) equality of labors taking on the material form of one and the same substance, value, (b) measure of expenditure of labor by duration taking on the form of the magnitude of the value of products of labor, and (c) relations of producers taking on the form of relations of things.

Furthermore, in this perverted capitalist society not only does everything "take on the form of its opposite", but the forms resolve themselves, or rather are integral parts of some general form. Thus there is the general form of surplus value and its fragmentation into profit, interest and rent, and they should be analyzed first in its fundamental general form. Relegate the divisions of surplus value into a minor battle among the capitalist. Then, and more importantly, there is the general value-form, labor without any specificity other than that it is human, masses and masses of abstract labor. In that is it the general form of value is nothing but the REDUCTION of all kinds of actual labor to human labor in general. By its very structure the general form of value shows it is but the social resume of the world of commodities. The exploitative relationship is therefore reflected right in the general value-form. That is the leap over the historic barrier that kept classical political economy at source and kept it from going to condition and be alive to the contradictions in the very method of production. The minute you arrived at that generalization, the contradictions leapt at you from all sides:

(1) not only between use-value and value but within value itself, between the form, exchange value, and the reality, mastery of dead over living labor, which reduces all sorts of concrete labors to one abstract mass.

(2) yet although value is the abstract universal of capitalism, the concrete universal is the commodity-form of that abstraction, value.

(3) contradiction between constant and variable capital whereby although they are both component parts of capital (a new category discovered by Marx to distinguish it from mere market manifestation of fixed and circulating capital) and although the constant is master over the variable, the variable being the only source of value, nevertheless has production at its throat; the hell of a spot that puts the capitalist is seen in the market by the decline in the rate of profit which the method of capitalist production cannot only ~~escape~~ not escape for it must use ever more c/v , but, what is worse, the aim of production for ever greater masses of surplus value, so constantly against the very method that there is no other expression but crisis.

(4) then there is the contradiction in the two departments of production between means of production and means of consumption, which is further aggravated by the fact while he uses m.c. to ensnare the worker, he has no direct control over him until he gets him in the factory.

(5) and then the constant persistence of form the more various ~~form~~ determinations transcend each other, whether that be in price versus value, or depreciation of existing capital vs. cheaper new values, or money as a being-in-itself vs. money as a mere means of circulation to get expanded reproduction.

Now these contradictions are not something to be cleared away theoretically alone, as Marx does in CRITIQUE, but as in CAPITAL, it becomes a practical question, the magnitude of the working day, the civil war between capital and labor appears immediately in CAPITAL hidden in the commodity-form.

Here is what Marx does in CAPITAL. He makes a class distinction immediately and says that any one who ever did not so consider the commodity or exchange was either a bourgeois in reality ("a practical bourgeois") or at least in thought ("usual method of procedure"), and having thus put any other method but that in CAPITAL on the other side of the barricades, he proceeds calmly in this "other world", the proletarian world, while he analyzes nothing but the capitalist method of production. But he himself having always been a revolutionist, his CRITIQUE cannot be that easily dismissed by "others", meaning myself and the brutal method you wish me to employ just has me scared.

Dec. 2, 1950

Dear J:

Last week when I discussed with you and the other comrades the placing of our tendency historically, I began back in the days of Marx's Communist League, 1847, Lenin's concept of party, 1903, thence nearly jumped all the way to 1917 and the creation of the Third International, with 1914-1917 occupying an important but not the central point. On second thought however I wish to limit myself precisely to this point and none other. This is necessary because it is the most analagous to the point reached in our own tendency's development.

The whole impulse to our new style as well as to the work on dialectic comes in thought as much from Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks in this period, as in practice it comes from the stage of development of the American working class within the context of world statification. For clarity's sake, then, a tabulation would be in order, and I trust it will not matter if I repeat what you already well know and in places have formulated more precisely. The point is that this precisely is the precedent historic roots for our unprecedented development.

(1) The beginning of the historic analogy is easy to grasp because it was so profoundly analyzed by Lenin after it shocked him, that is to say that World War I meant not only the collapse of capitalism long foretold by Marxists, but the collapse of the Marxist International itself. That Lenin never wavered for a single instant was not due to the fact that he was faithful to what they betrayed. It was not only a matter of a different policy. Not at all. Their policies were different because they had a different method of approach to everything. The fact is that even Lenin was not fully conscious of this until the betrayal was actual. Betrayal, he said, "means ideological collapse." (The Bolsheviks and World War by Gankin & Fisher, esp. pp. 41-143) And with that explanation of betrayal he ~~straightened out~~ to get his own mind, his method of thinking, straightened out first of all. With the world collapsing about him, he turned his steps to the Berne library where he reread all the works of Hegel.

(2) It didn't take him long to work out a political line; he had that from the start. Neither was he in any way confused where to search for the cause of betrayal. It was impossible to fight betrayal without knowing the economic roots. Any one who failed to understand that, understood nothing. In the gathering of data for Imperialism Lenin was no different in 1915 than he had been after the defeat of the 1905 Russian Revolution when he began to gather data for Development of Capitalism in Russia. What was different was the dialectic approach; as basic to the statistics was Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind.

In form no doubt the two periods parallel each other also in philosophic "feel" since he wrote his Materialism and Empirio Criticism in the former period, and his Philosophic Notebooks in the latter period. In essence the 1914 period is entirely and wholly different because the task is entirely different. The people who turned from the revolutionary road

in 1908 returned to god worship and Lenin counterposed materialism to idealism. Those who betrayed in 1914 were all materialists. It was not a question of counterposing materialism to idealism, but dialectics or dialectical materialism to vulgar materialism:

The task, furthermore, was not only to fight the betrayer Kautsky or Plekhanov, but, as the revolution approached, to fight also the revolutionaries, Bukharin and Luxemburg.

(3) In counterposing dialectical to vulgar materialism he found the "everything" that was different in the Second International, including himself before 1914, and the dialectician Marx. His generalizations were sweeping: (1) None of the Marxists of the past half century under Marx since it was impossible to grasp completely Marx's CAPITAL "if you have not studied through and understood the whole of Hegel's LOGIC." And (2) "Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectic) probably more than 1,000 pages.... There is nil in them about the larger Logic, about it, its thoughts (i.e. dialectic proper as a philosophic science)!!" ~~That's~~

That is not the Plekhanov who betrayed he is referring to, but the Plekhanov the Marxist who was his teacher, even as Kautsky had been. And he does not hesitate also to compare the "economism" of Bukharin to that of the "arodniks; it is he says "imperialist economism".

i.e., (4) Lenin was reacting then to the Social Democracy and to the economism of Bukharin. We are reacting to Stalinism and the economism of the Fourth. The method we must use is the same; the task is entirely different. Two things you wrote in May 1949 after you finished your Notes on Dialectic (which by no accident were written in 1948 as the FI reached the heights and began its downswing in its reaction first to the mass movements of 1945-6, then to Stalinism-Titoism, 1948) stand out in my mind especially: "We include in our epistemology, materialism and idealism. The whole dialectical theory of knowledge, practice, all ending in the practice of proletarian, revolutionary politics. I use 'politics' in the Greek sense-- the whole man, the complete man. Today the problem of epistemology is a political problem, i.e., the full and complete actions of universal man, politics, economics, philosophy. Lenin had this in 1914 as an abstract universal, or, if you like a first statement of the concrete universal. In 1908 or thereabouts the political party was for him the only means by which the workers could test the relation of forces. Today the party, in the sense that we use it, now, is the only test of all knowledge, etc. I don't know if you see this as I see it." And then: "Today it is not a question in Europe or China of whether capitalism will solve the questions. The question is how new society is going to be born, what are the objective and subjective means. That is the doctrine of the Notion."

was (5) The Doctrine of Essence, which/Lenin's problem, he had worked out in two years while the capitalist world and the Marxist party collapsed about him. Then he came up with State and Revolution. We must have two years to work out the Doctrine of the Nation, and it is so much easier to do with only party ~~struggle~~ in stride. And time we'll show with what we'll come up with.

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P.S. To get into the period 1914-1916, in addition to Lenin's Selected Works, IV, V, & VI, and those remarkable 4 pages On Dialectics in Vol. XI, pp.81-85, the following works are wonderful to review: The Bolsheviks and the World War, by Gankin and Fisher; Memories of Lenin by Krupskaya, Vol. II, on pp.153-5 she emphasizes that the period 1914-16 was especially significant for (1) international range of Lenin's activity which gave a new tone to his work for Russia, and (2) study of philosophy and she comments: "This was not the usual way of presenting Marx's teachings. Before writing the chapters on philosophic materialism and dialectics Ilyich again diligently read Hegel and other philosophers and continued these studies even after he finished the essay. The aim of his work in the realm of philosophy was to master the method of transforming philosophy into a concrete guide to action. His brief remarks about the dialectical approach toward all phenomena, made in 1921 in the course of the controversies with Trotsky and Bukharin concerning the trade unions, are the best evidence of how much Ilyich had gained in this respect from his studies in philosophy begun upon his arrival in Berne."

In this respect the introduction by Adoratsky, under the editorship of Bukharin, to Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks states: "In all works after 1914 Lenin mentions the dialectic. For example: 'Collapse of the Second International', 'Results of the Discussion on Self-Determination', 'About the Junius Pamphlet' and the trade union dispute." And the introduction by Deborin to a later reprint of Lenin's Notes also includes "Lenin's Notes on Bukharin's Economics of the Transition Period" as being entirely concerned with "method".