

Leninism Rejected As Out Of Date

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There follows a translation of an article that appeared in the Azerbaijani-Language party and government daily newspaper Kommunist on December 16. The article is entitled "What Kind of Socialism Have We Built?"; the author is Doctor of Historical Sciences Evgeni Wittenberg.

In the center of contemporary discussions stands the question: what kind of society has been founded in the USSR? On the one hand, it is a society in which nominal consumption and poverty are not legitimate, and which is characterized by citizens' social defense and full employment. But *Perestroika* has highlighted some aspects of the situation. Now we concede openly that the terrible roots of Stalinism have not yet been totally extirpated in our country, and the humanistic potential of the new social structure has not fully been brought out. In some fields of science and technology we lag behind, and the problems of food supplies and housing, which are of vital importance for the population, have not yet been completely solved at the contemporary level.

This is why the issue of evaluating the stage that the Soviet Union has attained in constructing socialism is not only a theoretical but also a practical policy problem. In trying to answer this question, theorists, social scientists, journalists and writers refer to Lenin's heritage. But this does not mean that any thesis of this theory and any practical step should be validated by an excerpt from Lenin's works in accordance with the desire to comply with the traditional judgment of the past.

The present reference to Lenin must help us to determine which stage we have reached; but in order to achieve this, the following questions should legitimately be correctly answered: which concepts of the classics of Marxism-Leninism have been implemented in the USSR, which were implemented only partially, with distortions, and which have never been implemented? While again referring to Lenin and revising fully and in depth his concept of socialism to cleanse it from the dirt of Stalinism, and comparing it with true socialism, it is necessary to acknowledge that it is difficult to find answers in Lenin's works to all the questions that arise at the end of the 20th century, and that some of his theoretical precepts are out of date. For this reason Soviet theoretical opinion is now faced with the problem not only of revising Lenin's concepts of socialism, but also, first and foremost, of improving them.

Today, when authors and researchers refer to Lenin's works to a greater or lesser degree in an attempt to demonstrate which stage Soviet society has reached, they are faced with diametrically opposing conclusions.

To take the official viewpoint first: it is known that this point of view was commented on by Gorbachev in his speech devoted to the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. In this speech it was conceded that in spite of all difficulties, deficiencies and mistakes, a socialist society has been formed in the Soviet Union. But in some important aspects (in the methods of administrative authority of the construction of socialism, in carrying out collectivization), serious departures from Lenin's principles of socialism have been permitted. Ultimately, a socialist society with serious deformations was founded in our country. But although before *Perestroika* everything used to start and end with the

official point of view, and the role of science used to end with commentary on the official point of view, this can no longer convince scholars in conditions of *Perestroika*.

It must be said that pluralism of opinions exists concerning which kind of society has been formed in the USSR. For example, contrary to the official point of view, some Soviet scholars argue that the society we have built does not correspond to Lenin's principles of socialism, and cannot be accepted as a socialist society. Proceeding from this thesis, they claim that the following principles of socialism as defined by Lenin have not yet been implemented in the Soviet Union: "socialization at work" (workers have not yet become the owners of the means of production, and the right of property has been appropriated by the party-economic bureaucracy); "socialist democracy" (the problem of the non-involvement of workers in governing the state has not yet been solved and socialist self-management has not been improved).

These scholars further consider that the principle of socialist justice has not been fully implemented in the USSR. There is no developed system of pluralism of interests and opinions. Finally, the fact that such an integral value of socialism as humanism has been distorted in the USSR has been adduced as principle evidence.

Distinct from those scholars cited above, the supporters of a second current theory are in contrast trying to prove that real socialism has been founded in the USSR, and that the divergences from Lenin's model of socialism in the Stalin era and later do not touch the basis of socialism, but are concerned with different problems. In order to substantiate their point of view they adduce such evidence as the fact that in spite of limited mistakes and deficiencies, the means of production have been placed under the authority of the workers as planned by Lenin; real popular rule exists; and the socialist principle of wages in accordance with labor has basically been implemented.

A third group of Soviet scholars argue that "barracks socialism" has been founded in the USSR with the evident bureaucratic destruction of the rule of equal division of material benefits and with the administrative-authority management system.

Finally, the concept of "early socialism" has emerged in scientific circles. The essence of this concept is that the Soviet Union is at the beginning stage of socialism, and for subjective or objective reasons this stage may have been subject to distortions and destruction.

After commenting on current views on the nature of the society created in the USSR, one might hope that it remained only for the author to espouse one of them and explain his reasons for doing so. But the author considered it necessary to put forward another view, his own.

We think that, in spite of all historical zigzags, major and sometimes unjustifiable mistakes and departures from the correct path, a new socialist society and civilization has been formed in the USSR. Our society is one in which the basic outlines of socialism have been built, and in spite of distortions here, the key values -- the rule of the administration of the workers and public ownership of the means of production -- really exist.

If traditional but simple similarities between the construction of socialism and building a house are examined, then we must regrettably admit today that we have not carried out all of the intentions of such great architects as Marx, Engels and Lenin. We have built a great deal, but because we have not built many things as desired, we still have much to accomplish in the sphere of formation, reconstruction and perfecting of social relations. (END)