

# Leon Trotsky - Culture and Socialism - 1927

Leon Trotsky  
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## I. Technology and Culture

Let us recall first of all that culture once signified a ploughed, cultivated field, as opposed to untouched forests and virgin lands. Culture was juxtaposed to nature, that is, what had been achieved by human effort was contrasted with the gifts of nature. This juxtaposition fundamentally retains its force even today.

Culture is all that has been created, built, assimilated and achieved by man throughout the course of his entire history, in contrast with what has been given by nature, including the natural history of man himself as an animal species. The science which studies man as a product of animal evolution is called anthropology. But from the very moment when man separated himself from the animal kingdom, – and this occurred approximately when he first took into his hands primitive tools such as stones or sticks and armed the organs of his body with them, – from that time the creation and accumulation of culture began, that is, of all kinds of knowledge and skill in the struggle with nature in order to pacify nature.

When we speak of the culture accumulated by past generations, we deliberately rest upon primarily its material acquisitions in the form of tools, machines, buildings, monuments and so forth. Is this culture? Undoubtedly it is culture, or its material deposits, – material culture. It creates, – on the foundations of nature – the basic setting for our life, our everyday existence, and our creativity. But the most valuable part of culture consists of its deposits in the consciousness of man himself – our devices, customs, skills, and acquired capabilities which grew out of all preceding material culture and, while resting upon it, continues to rebuild it. We will then, comrades, consider it firmly established: culture grows out of man's struggle with nature for existence, for the improvements of living conditions, for the increase of his power. But it is on this basis that classes grow as well. In the process of adapting to nature, in the struggle with its hostile forces, human society develops into a complex class organization. It is the class structure of society which most decisively determines the content and form of human history, i.e., its material relations and their ideological reflections. By saying this, we are also saying that historical culture has a class character.

Slave society, feudal-serf and bourgeois society have engendered a corresponding culture: at various stages there is different culture, with a multitude of transitional forms. Historical society is the organization of the exploitation of man by man. Culture serves the class organization of society. An exploiting society gives birth to an exploitative culture. But does this then mean that we are against all culture of the past?

We have indeed come upon a profound contradiction. Everything that has been won, created and built through the efforts of man and which serves to elevate man's powers – is culture. But since we are dealing with social rather than individual man; since culture is a socio-historical phenomenon by its very essence; since historical society was and continues to be class society, then culture unfolds as a fundamental instrument of class oppression. Marx said: "The dominant ideas of an epoch are the ideas of the ruling class of the given epoch." This statement also applies to culture as a whole. Yet we say to the working class: you

must master all the culture of the past, otherwise you won't build socialism. How can this be understood?

Many have stumbled over this contradiction, and they stumble so frequently because they approach the concept of class society superficially, semi-idealistically, forgetting that fundamentally this is the organization of production. Every class society developed according to definite means of struggling with nature, and these means have changed depending on the development of technology. What is more fundamental: the class organization of society or its productive forces? Undoubtedly, the productive forces. For it is on them, on a certain level of their development, that classes evolve and refashion themselves. In the productive forces is expressed man's materialized economic skill, his historical ability to secure his own existence. Classes grow on this dynamic foundation, and their mutual relations determine the character of culture.

And hence, with regard to technology above all else, we must ask ourselves: is it only an instrument of class oppression? It is enough to ask such a question to be able to answer at once: no, technology is a basic conquest of mankind; although it has indeed served until now as an instrument of exploitation, it is at the same time the basic requirement for the liberation of the exploited. The machine strangles the wage-slave. But the wage-slave can only be freed through the machine. Herein lies the root of the whole question.

If we don't forget that the driving force of the historical process is the growth of productive forces which liberate man from the power of nature, then we will understand that the proletariat must master the entire accumulation of knowledge and skill, developed by mankind over the course of its history, in order to raise itself up by rebuilding life on the principles of solidarity.

"Does culture drive technology, or technology culture?" – asks one of the notes lying before me. This is the wrong way to pose the question. Technology cannot be counterposed to culture, for it is culture's mainspring. Without technology there is no culture. The growth of technology drives culture forward. But the science and general culture which rise up on the basis of technology give a powerful impulse to the growth of technology. Here there is a dialectical interaction.

Comrades, if you need a simple but expressive example of the contradiction imbedded in technology itself, then you won't find a better one than railways. If you examine European passenger trains, then you will see there wagons of "various classes." These classes remind us of the classes in capitalist society. First class is for the privileged elite, second for the middle bourgeoisie, third for the petty bourgeoisie and fourth – for the proletariat, which for good reason was formerly called the fourth estate. Taken by themselves, railways are a colossal cultural and technological conquest by mankind, which greatly changed the face of the earth in the course of a single century. But the class structure of society influences even the structure of the means of transport. And our Soviet railways are still a long way from equality. That is not only because they use wagons inherited from the past, but also because the New Economic Policy only prepares equality, but does not create it.

Before the advent of railways, civilization crowded along the shores of

the seas and banks of large rivers. Railways introduced whole continents to capitalist culture. One of the fundamental, if not the most fundamental reason for the backwardness and neglect of the Russian village is the lack of railways, highways and access roads. In this respect, the majority of our villages remain in pre-capitalist conditions. We must overcome what is our great ally and at the same time our greatest foe – distance. Socialist economy is planned economy. A plan assumes communication, most of all. The means of transportation are the most important mode of communication. Every new railway line is a road to culture, and in our conditions a road to socialism. Once again, with the raising of the technology of the means of transportation and the prosperity of the country, the social profile of the railways will change as well: the division into "classes" will disappear, and everyone will travel in comfortable wagons... if, by that time people still ride in wagons, rather than preferring to travel on airplanes which are available to one and all.

Let's take another example – the instruments of militarism, the means of destruction. In this sphere the class nature of society is expressed in particularly clear and repulsive forms. There is no destructive device, be it an explosive or a poisonous substance, the discovery of which would not be a valuable scientific or technological achievement in itself. Explosives or poisonous substances can also be used for creative, and not only destructive purposes, and they open up new possibilities in the area of discoveries and inventions.

The proletariat can seize state power only by shattering the old apparatus of class rule. We have performed this work more decisively than ever has been done in history. However, in building a new apparatus, we discovered that we were compelled to use elements of the old to a certain and rather significant degree. The further socialist reconstruction of the state apparatus is inextricably linked with political, economic and cultural work in general.

We don't have to shatter technology. The proletariat takes possession of the factories outfitted by the bourgeoisie, and it does so in the form in which the revolutionary overthrow found them. The old equipment serves us to this very day. Such a circumstance reveals most clearly and directly the fact that we do not renounce this "heritage." How could it be otherwise? After all, the revolution was carried out precisely in order to seize this "heritage." However, in the form in which we took it, the old technology is completely unsuitable for socialism. It represents the crystallized anarchy of the capitalist economy. The competition between various enterprises, the drive for profits, the uneven development of separate branches, the backwardness of various regions, the small-scale nature of agriculture, the squandering of human resources, – in technology all this found its expression in iron and copper. But whereas the apparatus of class oppression can be shattered with a revolutionary blow, the productive apparatus of capitalist anarchy can only be reconstructed gradually. The completion of the restoration period, – on the basis of the old equipment – only leads us to the threshold of this grandiose task. We must complete it no matter what.

## II. The Heritage of Spiritual Culture

Spiritual culture is just as contradictory as material culture. And just as from the arsenals and warehouses of material culture we put into circulation not the bow and arrow, not stone tools or bronze age tools, but we take the best possible tools of the latest technology, – we must approach spiritual culture in just the same way.

The main element in the culture of the old society was religion. It was the most important form of human knowledge and unity; but in this form

was expressed most of all the weakness of man before nature and his powerlessness within society. We are thoroughly sweeping aside religion and all its surrogates.

The situation with philosophy is different. From the philosophy created by class society we must assimilate two invaluable elements: materialism and dialectics. It was precisely from the organic combination of materialism and dialectics that Marx's method was born and his system arose. This method lies at the foundations of Leninism.

If we pass on to science in the true sense of the word, then here it becomes absolutely clear that we confront an enormous reservoir of knowledge and skill accumulated by mankind throughout its long life. One can, it is true, point out that in science, whose goal is the cognition of reality, there are many tendentious class adulterations. Absolutely correct! If even the railways show signs of the privileged position of some and the poverty of others, then the same applies even more so to science, whose material is much more flexible than the metal and wood used to build railway cars. But we must keep in mind that scientific creativity is fundamentally nourished by the need to understand nature, in order to master its forces. Although class interests have introduced and continue to introduce false tendencies even in the natural sciences, nevertheless this falsification is limited by the bounds beyond which it begins to directly obstruct technological progress. If you examine the natural sciences from the ground up, from the realm of accumulating elementary facts to the highest and most complex generalizations, then you will see that the more empirical the scientific investigation, the closer it is to its material and to the facts, the more indisputable are the results it gives. The wider the field of generalizations, the more closely natural science comes to problems of philosophy, the more susceptible it is to the influence of class suggestions.

Matters are more complicated and worse when it comes to the social sciences and the so-called "humanities". Even here, of course, the desire to know what is fundamentally at work. Due to this we have had, by the way, the brilliant school of classical bourgeois economists. But class interest, which is felt in the social sciences much more directly and imperatively than in natural science, soon brought to a halt the development of economic thought in bourgeois society. In this field we communists are better armed, however, than in any other. Basing themselves on bourgeois science and criticizing it, the socialist theoreticians who were awakened by the class struggle of the proletariat created, in the works of Marx and Engels, the powerful method of historical materialism and its unsurpassed application in *Capital*. This does not mean, of course, that we are insured against the influence of bourgeois ideas in the fields of economics and sociology as a whole. No, at every step the most vulgar professorial-socialistic and philistine-populist tendencies burst into our everyday practice from the old "treasure-houses" of knowledge, seeking nourishment for themselves in the amorphous and contradictory relations of the transitional period. But even in this realm we have the irreplaceable criteria of Marxism which have been verified and enriched in Lenin's works. And the less we restrict ourselves to the experience of today, the more widely we embrace world-wide economic development as a whole, separating its basic tendencies from conjunctural changes, the more decisive will be our victory over vulgar economists and sociologists.

In questions of law, morality and ideology in general, the situation of bourgeois science is even more lamentable, if this is possible, than in the realm of economics. One can find a tiny pearl of genuine knowledge in these fields only after rummaging through dozens of professorial dunghoops.

Dialectics and materialism comprise the basic elements of the Marxist cognition of the world. But this by no means implies that they can be applied in any field of knowledge like an ever-ready master-key. The dialectic cannot be imposed on facts, it must be derived from the facts, from their nature and their development. Only painstaking work on

boundless material gave Marx the ability to erect the dialectical system of economics on the concept of value as realized labor. Marx's historical works, and even his newspaper articles, are constructed in the same way. One can apply dialectical materialism to new fields of knowledge only while mastering them from within. Bourgeois science can be cleaned up only by mastering bourgeois science. You will achieve nothing here by wild criticism or naked command. Assimilation and application go hand in hand here with critical re-working. We have the method, but there is enough work to last generations.

The Marxist criticism of science must be not only vigilant, but cautious, otherwise it might degenerate into out-and-out sycophancy or Famusovism.[1] Let us take psychology as an example. Pavlov's reflexology completely follows the lines of dialectical materialism. It destroys for all time the wall between physiology and psychology. The simplest reflex is physiological, and a system of reflexes gives us "consciousness." The accumulation of physiological quantity yields a new "psychological" quality. The method of Pavlov's school is experimental and painstaking. Generalizations are being won step by step: from a dog's saliva to poetry, i.e., to its psychological mechanics (but not its social content). Of course, the paths leading to poetry are yet to be seen.

The school of the Viennese psychoanalyst Freud takes a different approach to the problem. It assumes in advance that the driving force behind the most complex and refined psychic processes is physiological need. In this general sense it is materialistic, if we leave aside the question of whether or not it places too much emphasis on the sexual element at the expense of others, for this is already a debate within the confines of materialism. But the psychoanalyst doesn't approach the problem of consciousness experimentally, from lower phenomena to higher, or from simple reflex to complex; he tries to take all these intermediate steps with a single bound, going from the top down, from religious myth, lyrical poem or dream – straight to the physiological foundation of the psyche.

Idealists teach that the psyche is independent, and that the "soul" is a bottomless well. Both Pavlov and Freud consider that physiology is the bottom of the "soul." But Pavlov, like a diver, descends to the bottom and painstakingly investigates the well from the bottom up. Freud, on the other hand, stands above the well, and with a penetrating stare tries to capture or guess the outlines of the bottom through the depths of the ever-changing and murky water. Pavlov's method is the experiment. Freud's method is conjecture, and sometimes fantastic. The attempt to declare psychoanalysis "incompatible" with Marxism and to simply turn one's back on Freudianism is too simple, or, to be more precise, simplistic. But in no case are we obliged to adopt Freudianism either. It is a working hypothesis which can give and undoubtedly does give conclusions and conjectures which go along the lines of materialist psychology. In time, the experimental path leads to verification. But we have neither the grounds nor the right to impose a ban on the other path, which, even if it is less reliable, still tries to anticipate the conclusions that will be reached by the experimental path, just much more slowly.[2]

With these examples I wanted, if only partially, to show the diversity of our scientific heritage and the complexity of the ways in which the proletariat can begin to master it. If in economic construction matters are not decided by decree and we must "learn to trade," then in science, naked command will yield nothing but harm and embarrassment. Here we have to "learn how to learn."

Art is one of the forms through which man finds an orientation in the world; in this sense the heritage of art is no different from the heritage of science and technology, – and it is no less contradictory. However, unlike science, art is a form of cognizing the world not as a system of laws, but as a grouping of images and, at the same time, as a means of inspiring certain feelings and moods. The art of past centuries has made man more complex and flexible, raising his psyche to a higher level and enriching his mind in many ways. This enrichment is an invaluable conquest of

culture. Mastery of the old art is therefore a necessary prerequisite not only for the creation of a new art, but for the construction of a new society, because for communism, people are needed with a highly developed psyche. Is the old art capable, however, of enriching us with the artistic cognition of the world? Yes, it is. And it is precisely for this reason that it is capable of nourishing our feelings and cultivating them. If we were to indiscriminately renounce the old art, then immediately we would become poorer in spirit.

Here and there we can observe among us today the tendency to advance the idea that art has as its goal only the inspiration of certain moods, but by no means the cognition of reality. Hence the conclusion: what kind of feelings can we be infected with by the art of the nobility or bourgeoisie? This is fundamentally wrong. The significance of art as a means of cognition – not only for the popular masses too, but for them in particular – is no less than its "sensual" significance. Not only the heroic poem, but the fairy-tale, song, proverb and popular ditty give us cognition in images; they illuminate the past, generalize our experience, widen our horizons, and only in this connection are capable of inspiring certain "feelings." This applies to all literature in general, not only to the epos but to the lyrical poem as well. It applies to painting and sculpture, too. The only exception, in a certain sense, is music, the effect of which is powerful, but one-sided. Of course, even music is based on a particular cognition of nature, of its sound and rhythms. But here the cognition is so deeply concealed, and the results of nature's inspirations so greatly refracted through the nerves of man, that music acts as a self-sufficient "revelation." Attempts to approximate all forms of art to music as the art of "infection" have frequently been made, and they always have signified the reduction of the role of reason in art in favor of an amorphous sensuality; in this sense they were and are reactionary... Worst of all, of course, are such works of "art" which give us neither cognition in images nor artistic "infection," but which advance the most outlandish pretensions. We publish no small number of such works, and unfortunately they appear not in student notebooks of work-studios, but in many thousands of copies...

Culture is a social phenomenon. For this very reason, language, as an instrument of communication between people, is its most important tool. The culture of language itself is the most important condition for the growth of all fields of culture, particularly science and art. Just as technology remains unsatisfied by the old measuring instruments and creates new ones: micrometers, voltmeters and so forth, aiming for and achieving ever greater accuracy, so, too, in the realm of language, the ability to choose the appropriate words and to combine them in the appropriate fashion, we need constant and systematic painstaking work on the achievement of the greatest precision, clarity and sharpness. The basis of this work must be the fight against illiteracy, semi-literacy or a low level of literacy. The next stage in this work is the mastery of classical Russian literature.

Yes, culture has been the main instrument of class oppression. But culture, and it alone, can become the instrument of socialist emancipation.

### III. Our Cultural Contradictions

#### Town and Country

What is peculiar about our position is that we – at the crossroads of the capitalist West and the colonial-peasant East – were the first to carry out a socialist revolution. The regime of proletarian dictatorship was first established in a country with an enormous heritage of backwardness and

barbarism, so that with us whole centuries of history lie between a Siberian nomad and a Moscow or Leningrad proletarian. Our social forms are transitional to socialism, therefore they are immeasurably higher than capitalist forms. In this sense we are justified in considering ourselves the most advanced country in the world. But our technology, which lies at the foundations of material or any other culture, is extraordinarily backward in comparison to the advanced capitalist countries. Herein lies the basic contradiction of our present reality. The historical task which flows from this contradiction consists in raising technology to the level of the social form. If we were unable to do this, then our social structure would inevitably fall to the level of our technological backwardness. Yes, in order to understand the full significance of technological progress for us, we must openly tell ourselves: if we were to be unable to supplement the Soviet form of our structure with the required productive technology, then we would preclude the possibility of making the transition to socialism and we would return back to capitalism, – and to what kind? To semi-serf, semi-colonial capitalism. The struggle for technology for us is the struggle for socialism, to which the entire future of our culture is inextricably linked.

Here is a fresh and very expressive example of our cultural contradictions. A few days ago a note appeared in our newspapers that our Public Library in Leningrad has taken first place when it comes to the number of volumes: it now holds 4,250,000 books! Our first sensation is a legitimate feeling of Soviet pride: our library is the first in the world! To what do we owe this achievement? To the fact that we expropriated private libraries. By nationalizing private property we have created the richest cultural institution, which is accessible to all. This simple fact indisputably illustrates the great advantages of the Soviet structure. But at the same time our cultural backwardness is expressed in the fact that the percentage of illiteracy in our country is greater than in any other European nation. Our library is first in the world, but as yet the minority of our population reads books. That's the way it is almost everywhere. Nationalized industry with gigantic but far from fantastic projects of the Dneprostroi, the Volga-Don Canal, etc., – yet the peasants still thresh with flails and rollers. Our marital legislation is permeated with a socialist spirit, but beatings still play no small role in family life. These and other contradictions flow from the entire structure of our culture, which is at the crossroads between West and East.

The basis of our backwardness is the monstrous domination of the village over the city, of agriculture over industry; moreover the village is dominated once again by the most backward tools and means of production. When we speak about historical serfdom, we primarily have in mind estate relations, the bondage of the peasant to the land-owner and Tsarist official. But, comrades, serfdom has a deeper foundation beneath it: the bondage of man to the earth, the full dependence of the peasant on the elements. Have you read Gleb Uspensky? I fear that the younger generation is not reading him. We must republish him, or at least his best works, and he has some superb ones. Uspensky was a populist. His political program was thoroughly utopian. But Uspensky – the chronicler of the village – is not only a superb artist, he is also a remarkable realist. He was able to understand the everyday life of the peasant and his psyche as derived phenomena which grow on an economic base and which are completely determined by it. He was able to understand the economic base of the village as the enslaved dependence of the peasant in the labor-process on the soil, and in general on the forces of nature. You should definitely read at least his *Power of the Land*. With Uspensky, artistic intuition replaces the Marxist method and, judging from its results, can in many respects compete with it. For precisely this reason, Uspensky the artist was always locked in mortal combat with Uspensky the populist. Even now we still must learn from the artist if we want to understand the powerful remnants of serfdom in peasant life, particularly in family relations, which often spill over into city life: it is enough to listen

carefully to the different notes of the discussion now unfolding concerning problems of marital legislation!

In all parts of the world, capitalism has made extremely tense the contradiction between industry and agriculture, town and country. In our country, due to the belatedness of our historical development, this contradiction bears an absolutely monstrous character. No matter how strange it might seem, our industry has already tried to equal the European and American examples at a time when our countryside has kept receding into the depths of the seventeenth and even more distant centuries. Even in America capitalism is clearly unable to raise agriculture to the level of industry. This task completely passes over to socialism. In our conditions, with the colossal predominance of the village over the city, the industrialization of agriculture is the most important part of socialist construction.

By the industrialization of agriculture we understand two processes, which, only when taken in combination, can finally and decisively erase the boundary between town and country. Let us dwell a bit more on this crucial question.

The industrialization of agriculture consists, on the one hand, in the separation from the village domestic economy of a whole series of branches involved in the preliminary processing of industrial resources and raw foodstuffs. For all industry in general has come from the countryside, by way of handicrafts and primitive production, through the detachment of various branches from the closed system of household economy, through specialization, and the creation of the necessary training, technology, and then even machine production. Our Soviet industrialization will have to follow this path to a large degree, i.e., it must follow the path of socializing a whole series of productive processes which stand between village economy, in the true sense of the word, and industry. The example of the United States shows that unlimited possibilities lie before us.

But the question is not exhausted by what we have said. The overcoming of the contradictions between agriculture and industry assumes the industrialization of field-crop cultivation, animal husbandry, horticulture and so forth. This means that even these branches of productive activity must be based on scientific technology: the broad utilization of machines in the correct combination, tractorization and electrification, fertilization, proper crop rotation, laboratory and experimental testing of methods and results, the correct organization of the entire production process with the most rational use of labor power, etc. Of course, even highly organized field cultivation will differ in some ways from machine-building. But then even in industry, various branches profoundly differ from one another. If today we are justified in juxtaposing agriculture to industry as a whole, then this is because agriculture is conducted on a small scale and by primitive means, with a slavish dependence of the producer on the conditions of nature and with highly uncultured conditions of existence for the peasant-producer. It is not enough to socialize, i.e. to switch over to factory rails, separate branches of today's village economy, such as butter-making, cheese-making, the production of starch or syrup, etc. We must socialize agriculture itself, that is, tear it away from its present state of fragmentation and replace today's squalid digging around in the soil with scientifically organized grain and rye "factories," with cattle and sheep "processing plants," and so forth. That this is possible is shown in part by the capitalist experience already at hand, in particular in the agricultural experience of Denmark, where even hens have been subordinated to planning and standardization; they lay eggs according to schedule, in enormous quantities, and of the same size and color.

The industrialization of agriculture means the elimination of today's fundamental contradiction between countryside and city, and consequently, between the peasant and worker: when it comes to their role in the nation's economy, their living standards, or their cultural level, they

must approximate each other to such a degree that the very boundary between them has disappeared. A society where the mechanized cultivation of the fields is an equal part of the planned economy, where the city adopts the advantages of the countryside (open spaces, greenery), and where the village enriches itself with the advantages of the city (paved roads, electric lights, piped water supply, sewer system), that is, where the very contradiction between town and country disappears, where the peasant and worker turn into participants of equal value and equal rights in a unified production process – such a society will be a genuine socialist society.

The road to this society is long and difficult. Mighty electro-power stations are the most important milestones along the way. They will bring to the village both light and transforming power: against the power of the soil – the power of electricity!

Not long ago we opened the Shatura power station, one of the best of our construction sites, built on a peat-bog. From Moscow to Shatura is a little more than one hundred kilometers. It would seem that they could shake hands. And yet what a difference in conditions! Moscow is the capital of the Communist International. But you go a few dozen kilometers and you find backwoods, snow and fir-trees, frozen swamps and wild beasts. Black, log-cabined hamlets lie dozing beneath the snow. Sometimes wolf tracks can be seen from the window of the railway car. Where the Shatura station now stands, a few years ago, when they started construction, elk could be found. Now the distance between Moscow and Shatura is covered by a sophisticated construction of metallic masts which support the cable for 115,000 volts of current. And beneath these masts, foxes and wolves will bring out their young. That's the way it is with our entire culture – it is made from the most extreme contradictions, from the highest achievements of technology and generalizing thought on the one hand, and from the primordial taiga on the other.

Shatura lives on peat as if it were pasture. Indeed, all the miracles created by the childish imagination of religion, and even by the creative fantasy of poetry, pale before this simple fact: machines which occupy insignificant space are devouring the age-old swamp, transforming it into invisible energy, and returning it along slender cables to the same industry which created and set up these machines.

Shatura is a thing of beauty. It was made by builders who were gifted and devoted to their work. Its beauty is neither artificial nor superimposed, but growing from the inner characteristics and demands of technology itself. The highest, indeed the only, criterion of technology is expediency. The test of expediency is its ability to economize. And this assumes the greatest correspondence between the whole and its parts, between means and ends. The economic and technological criterion completely coincides with the aesthetic. We can say, and this is no paradox: Shatura is a thing of beauty because the kilowatt-hour of its energy is cheaper than the kilowatt-hour of other stations constructed in similar conditions.

Shatura stands on a swamp. We have many swamps in the Soviet Union, many more than power stations. And we have many more forms of fuel which are waiting to be transformed into mechanical power. In the south, the Dnieper flows through the wealthiest industrial region, expending the mighty forces of its current on nothing; it plays along the centuries-old rapids, and waits for us to harness its currents with a dam, forcing it to illumine, set in motion and enrich our cities, factories and fields. This we shall do!

In the United States of America, each inhabitant receives 500 kilowatt-hours of energy per year; here, the figure is only 20 kilowatt-hours, that is, twenty-five times less. In general we have fifty times less mechanical driving power per person than in the United States. The Soviet system outfitted with American technology – that would be socialism. Our social system would put American technology to other, incomparably more rational use. But then American technology would transform our social structure and liberate it from the heritage of backwardness, primitiveness

and barbarism. The combination of the Soviet social structure with American technology fosters a new technology and new culture – a technology and culture for all, without favorites or outcasts.

### **The "Conveyor" Principle of Socialist Economy**

The principle of socialist economy is harmoniousness, that is, continuity based on inner coordination. Technologically, this principle finds its highest expression in the conveyor. What is the conveyor? An endless moving belt which brings to the worker or takes away from him anything that is required by the pace of his work. It is now widely known how Ford uses a combination of conveyors as a means of internal transport: of transfer and supply. But the conveyor is something more: it is a method of regulating the very production process, insofar as the worker is forced to coordinate his movements with the movement of an endless belt. Capitalism uses this for a higher and more thorough exploitation of the worker. But such a usage is connected with capitalism, not with the conveyor as such. Indeed, where is the development of the methods of regulating labor headed: in the direction of piecework payment or in the direction of the conveyor? Everything indicates that it is in the direction of the conveyor. Piecework payment, much like any other form of individual control over the worker, is characteristic of capitalism during the early epochs of its development. This way guarantees a full physiological workload for the individual worker, but it doesn't guarantee the coordinated efforts of various workers. Both of these problems are solved automatically by the conveyor. Socialist organization of the economy must strive to lower the physiological burden of the individual workers in correspondence with the growth of technological power, at the same time maintaining the coordination of the efforts of different workers. And that precisely will be the significance of the socialist conveyor, as opposed to the capitalist one. Speaking more concretely, the main point here is the regulation of the belt's movement given a certain number of workers' hours, or, on the contrary, in the regulation of the workers' time given a certain belt speed.

Under the capitalist system the conveyor is implemented within the framework of a single enterprise, as a method of internal transport. But the principle of the conveyor as such is much wider. Every separate enterprise receives from without raw materials, fuel, auxiliary materials, and supplemental labor power. The relations between separate enterprises, even the most gigantic, are regulated by laws of the market, although it is true that these laws are in many instances limited by various kinds of long-term agreements. But every factory taken separately, and even more so society as a whole, is interested in the fact that raw material is supplied on time, that it doesn't lie about in warehouses or create hold-ups in production, that is, in other words, that it yields to the principle of the conveyor, in full correspondence to the rhythm of production. In this there is no need to always imagine the conveyor in the form of an endless moving belt. Its forms can be of limitless diversity. A railway, if it is working according to plan, i.e., without cross-hauling, without seasonal accumulation of loads, in short, without the elements of capitalist anarchy, – and under socialism a railway will work in precisely this way – is a powerful conveyor, guaranteeing the timely supply of factories with raw materials, fuel, materials and people. The same thing applies to steamships, trucks, and so forth. All forms of communication will become elements of transport for the inner system of production from the standpoint of the planned economy as a whole. Oil pipelines are a kind of conveyor for liquid substances. The more widespread the grid of oil pipelines, the less we need reservoirs, and the smaller is the portion of oil which turns into dead capital.

The conveyor system by no means assumes the crowding together of enterprises. On the contrary, modern technology allows their dispersion, not, of course, in a chaotic and random manner, but taking into strict account the most appropriate place (Standort) for each separate factory. The possibility of the wide distribution of industrial enterprises, without which it is impossible to dissolve the city into the village, and the village into the city, is largely guaranteed by electrical energy as a motive force. Metal cables are the most sophisticated conveyor of energy, making it possible to divide motive force into the smallest units, putting it to work or turning it off by simply pressing a button. It is precisely with these characteristics that the energy "conveyor" comes into the most hostile collision with the limitations of private property. In its present development, electricity is the most "socialistic" sector of technology. And it is no wonder, for it is its most advanced sector.

Gigantic land improvement systems – for proper irrigation or drainage – are, from this standpoint, the water conveyors of agriculture. The more that chemistry, machine-building and electrification liberate land cultivation from the action of the elements, thereby guaranteeing the highest level of planning, the more completely will today's "village economy" be integrated into the system of a socialist conveyor which regulates and coordinates all production, starting from the subsoil (the extraction of coal and ore) and the soil (plowing and sowing of the fields).

On the basis of his conveyor experience, old man Ford is trying to construct something of a social philosophy. In this attempt we see an extremely curious mixture of production and administrative experience on an exceptionally grand scale with the unbearable narrowness of a self-satisfied philistine who, while becoming a millionaire, has merely remained a petty-bourgeois with lots of money. Ford says: "If you want riches for yourself and well-being for your fellow citizens, act like I do." Kant demanded that every person act so that his behavior might become a norm for others. In the philosophical sense, Ford is a Kantian. But the practical "norm" for Ford's 200,000 workers is not Ford's behavior, but the motion of his automated conveyor: it determines the rhythm of their lives, the movement of their hands, feet and thoughts. For the "well-being of fellow citizens," Fordism must be separated from Ford; it must be socialized and purified. And socialism will do this.

"But what about the monotony of labor, depersonalized and despiritualized by the conveyor?" asks one of the notes from the audience. This concern is not serious. If you think it through to the end and talk it over, then it is mainly directed against the division of labor and against machinery in general. This is a reactionary path. Socialism and resistance to machinery have never had anything in common, nor will they ever. The fundamental, most crucial and most important task is the elimination of want. It is necessary that human labor gives as great a quantity of products as possible. Bread, boots, clothing, newspapers, – all that is necessary should be produced in such quantity that no one fears that he will go without. We must eliminate want, and along with it, greed. We must win prosperity, leisure, and along with them, the joy of living for all. A high productivity of labor is unattainable without mechanization and automation, the finished expression of which is the conveyor. The monotony of labor will be compensated by its shortening duration and by its growing ease. Society will always have branches of industry which demand individual creativity; that is where those will go who find their calling in production. We are talking, of course, about the most basic type of production in its most important branches, until, in any case, new chemical and energy revolutions in technology topple today's forms of mechanization. But we will let the future worry about that. Travel in a rowboat demands great personal creativity. Travel on a steamship is "more monotonous," but more comfortable and reliable. Besides, you really won't make it across the ocean in a rowboat. And we must cross the ocean of human want.

Everyone knows that physical needs are much more limited than

spiritual ones. The excessive satisfaction of physical needs quickly leads to satiety. Spiritual needs know no boundaries. But for spiritual needs to flourish, the full satisfaction of physical needs is required. Of course, we cannot, nor do we, postpone the struggle for raising the spiritual level of the masses until the time when we have no unemployment, homelessness or poverty. Everything that can be done, must be done. But it would be a wretched and contemptible pipe-dream to think that we can create a genuinely new culture before we secure the prosperity, abundance and leisure of the popular masses. We can and will verify our progress as it is expressed in the everyday life of the worker and peasant.

## The Cultural Revolution

I think that it is now clear to everyone that the creation of a new culture is not an independent task which is completed apart from our economic work and social or cultural construction as a whole. Is trade part of "proletarian culture?" From an abstract point of view, we would have to answer this question negatively. But an abstract point of view won't do here. In the transitional epoch, moreover in the initial stage in which we are located, products assume – and will long continue to do so – the social form of the commodity. But the commodity must be treated properly, that is, we must be able to sell and buy it. Without this, we will never move from the initial stage into the next. Lenin said that we must learn to trade, and he recommended that we learn from the European cultural examples. The culture of trading, as we now know quite well, is one of the most important components of the culture of the transitional period. Whether we will call the culture of trade associated with the workers state and cooperation "proletarian culture" – I don't know. But that it is a step toward socialist culture is beyond dispute.

When Lenin spoke of the cultural revolution, he saw its basic content as raising the cultural level of the masses. The metric system is a product of bourgeois science. But to teach one hundred million peasants this uncomplicated system of measures means to accomplish a great revolutionary and cultural task. It is almost beyond doubt that we will not achieve this without the tractor and without electric energy. The basis of culture is technology. The decisive instrument of the cultural revolution must be the revolution in technology.

With regard to capitalism, we say that the development of the productive forces is being held up by the social forms of the bourgeois state and bourgeois property. Having carried out the proletarian revolution, we say that the development of social forms is being held up by the development of productive forces, i.e., by technology. The great link in the chain, which, if we seize hold of can produce the cultural revolution, is the link of industrialization, – but by no means the link of literature or philosophy. I hope that these words will not be understood as an ill-meaning or disrespectful attitude toward philosophy and poetry. Without generalizing thought and without art, human life would be bare and poverty-stricken. But after all, that, to a large degree, is how life is now for millions of people. The cultural revolution must consist in opening up the possibility that they can truly gain access to culture, and not just its leftover stubs. But this is impossible without creating the greatest material preconditions. That is why a machine which automatically produces bottles is for us at the present moment a first-rate factor in the cultural revolution, while an heroic poem is only a tenth-rate factor.

Marx once said that philosophers had sufficiently interpreted the world, and that the task now was to turn it upside down. In these words there was by no means a lack of respect for philosophy. Marx was himself one of the most powerful philosophers of all time. His words simply meant that the

further development of philosophy, and of culture as a whole, both material and spiritual, demands a revolution in social relations. And therefore Marx appealed from philosophy to the proletarian revolution, – not against philosophy, but for it. In the same sense, we can now say: it's fine when poets sing of the revolution and proletariat; but it is even better when a powerful turbine does the singing. We have many songs of mediocre value which remain the property of small circles. We have terribly few turbines. By this I don't want to say that mediocre poems hinder the appearance of turbines. No, such an assertion cannot be made. But the correct orientation of public opinion, i.e., an understanding of the true correlation of phenomena – the whys and wherefores – is absolutely necessary. We must understand the cultural revolution not in a superficial idealistic way nor in the spirit of small circles. We are talking about changing the conditions of life, the methods of work and the everyday habits of a great people, of a whole family of peoples. Only a powerful system of tractors which will for the first time in history allow the peasant to straighten his back; only a glass-blowing machine which produces hundreds of thousands of bottles and frees the lungs of the glassblower; only a turbine of tens and hundreds of thousands of horsepower; only an airplane accessible to all; – only all these things together will guarantee the cultural revolution – and not for the minority but for all. Only this kind of cultural revolution deserves the name. Only on its foundations will a new philosophy and a new art begin to flourish.

Marx said: "The dominant ideas of an epoch are the ideas of the ruling class of the given epoch." This is also true with regard to the proletariat, but in quite a different way than with other classes. Having seized power, the bourgeoisie tried to perpetuate it. Its entire culture was adapted to this purpose. Having taken power, the proletariat must inevitably strive to shorten the period of its rule as much as possible, by drawing nigh the classless socialist society.

### **The Culture of Morals**

To trade in a cultured way means, among other things, not to deceive, that is, to break with our national trading tradition: "If you don't deceive, you won't make a sale." Lying and deceiving is not just a personal flaw, but a function (or action) of the social order. Lying is a means of struggle, and consequently, it flows from contradiction of interests. The most basic contradictions flow from class relations. Of course, one could say that deception is older than class society. Even animals display "cunning" and deception in the struggle for existence. Deception – military cunning – played no small role in the life of primitive tribes. Such deception still more or less flowed directly from the zoological struggle for existence. But from the moment when "civilized," i.e. class society arrived, the lie became horribly more complicated, turned into a social function, split along class lines and also became part of human "culture." But this is the part of culture which socialism will not accept. Relations in either socialist or communist society, i.e., in socialist society's highest development, will be thoroughly transparent and will not require such auxiliary methods as deception, lies, falsification, forgery, treachery and perfidy.

However, we are still a long way from that. In our relations and morals there are still many lies rooted both in serfdom and the bourgeois order. The highest expression of serfdom's ideology is religion. The relations in feudal-monarchal society were based on blind tradition and elevated to the level of religious myth. A myth is the imaginary and false interpretation of natural phenomena and social institutions in their interconnection. However, not only the deceived, that is, the oppressed masses, but also those in whose name the deception was carried out – the rulers, – for the most part believed in the myth and relied upon it in good conscience. An

objectively false ideology, woven out of superstitions, does not necessarily signify subjective mendacity. Only to the extent that social relations become more complex, that is, to the extent that the bourgeois social order develops, with which religious myth comes into ever growing contradiction, religion becomes the source of ever greater cunning and more refined deception.

Developed bourgeois ideology is rationalistic and directed against mythology. The radical bourgeoisie tried to make do without religion and build a state based on reason rather than tradition. An expression of this was democracy with its principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. The capitalist economy, however, created a monstrous contradiction between everyday reality and democratic principles. A higher grade form of lying is required to fill up this contradiction. Nowhere do people lie more politically than in bourgeois democracies. And this is no longer the objective "lying" of mythology, but the consciously organized deception of the people, using combined methods of extraordinary complexity. The technology of the lie is cultivated no less than the technology of electricity. The most "developed" democracies, France and the United States, possess the most deceitful press.

But at the same time – and this we must openly acknowledge – in France they trade more honestly than we do, and, in any case, with incomparably more attention paid to the buyer. Having achieved a certain level of well-being, the bourgeoisie renounces the swindling methods of primary accumulation, not from any abstract moral considerations, but for material reasons: petty deception, forgery and avariciousness spoil the reputation of an enterprise and undermine its future. The principles of "honest" trade, flowing from the interests of trade itself at a certain level of its development, enter into morals, become "moral" rules and are controlled by public opinion. True, in this area, too, the imperialist war introduced colossal changes, throwing Europe way back. But the post-war "stabilization" efforts of capitalism overcame the most malignant forms of savagery in trading. In any case, if we take our Soviet trading as a whole, that is, from the factory to the consumer in the distant village, then we must say that we trade in an immeasurably less cultured way than the advanced capitalist countries. This flows from our poverty, from the shortage of commodities, and from our economic and cultural backwardness.

The regime of proletarian dictatorship is irreconcilably hostile both to the objectively false mythology of the Middle Ages and to the conscious deceitfulness of capitalist democracy. The revolutionary regime is vitally interested in laying bare social relations rather than masking them over. This means that it is interested in political honesty, in saying what is. But we must not forget that the regime of revolutionary dictatorship is a transitional regime, and consequently, a contradictory one. The presence of powerful enemies forces us to use military cunning, and cunning is inseparable from lying. Our only need is that the cunning employed in the struggle against our enemies does not mislead our own people, that is, the laboring masses and their party. This is a basic demand of revolutionary politics which can be seen throughout all of Lenin's work.

But while our new state and social forms are creating the possibility and necessity of a greater degree of honesty than has ever been achieved between rulers and ruled, the same cannot be said about our relations of common, everyday life; here our economic and cultural backwardness – and in general our entire heritage from the past – continues to exert enormous pressure. We live much better than in 1920. But the shortage of the most necessary among life's blessings still leaves its mark on our life and on our morals, and will continue to do so for many years to come. From here flow the large and small contradictions, the large and small disproportions, the struggle tied to the contradictions, and the cunning, lies and deception all tied to the struggle. Here, too, there is only one escape: raising the level of our technology, both in production and in trade. A correct orientation along these lines should by itself

contribute to the betterment of our "morals." The interaction between rising technology and morals will advance us along the way to a social structure of civilized cooperators, that is, to a socialist culture.

## Notes

[1] Famusov is a main character in Griboedov's play, *Woe from Wit* (1824). A highly placed Moscow bureaucrat and careerist, he is particularly ingratiating before his superiors and arrogant toward his subordinates. As an arch-conservative, he fears nothing more than innovation and "free-thinking." Lenin used the reference in an interesting passage: "Our party Famusovs are not against playing the role of sharp and ruthless fighters for Marxism, but when it comes to factional favoritism, they are not against camouflaging the most serious retreats from Marxism!" (V. I. Lenin, "From the Editors," PSS, vol. 17, p.185) [Ashukin & Ashukina, *Krylatye slova*, M., 1986, p.657].

[2] Of course, the cultivation of a pseudo-Freudianism as erotic overindulgence or mischief has nothing in common with this question. Such wagging of the tongue bears no relation to science, and represents only decadent moods: the center of gravity is shifted from the brain to the spinal cord... L.T.



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