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*Leonid Aleksandrovich Griffen*

## ABSTRACT

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# What is Socialism?

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## ABSTRACT

*The doctrine of socialism as a just social order has a long history and has always provoked debate. The emergence of "real socialism" has not eliminated the disagreements regarding it. Based on an examination of various perspectives on socialism, the author concludes that the very approach to defining socialism is incorrect. Socialism should be viewed as a necessary stage in the development of society, namely, as a necessary transitional state between its class and classless periods. In a class society, participants in production are divided into managers, who privately own the means of production, and workers, who own only their own labor force. Consequently, the former dominates the latter. A classless society presupposes the abolition of private property and its replacement by public ownership. But here a contradiction arises. The transition between a class and a classless society, due to their contrasting natures, is a complex and lengthy process. And since property is a relationship between people over the means of production, realized in their shared production process, society cannot simultaneously possess both forms of ownership due to their diametrically opposed nature. Therefore, an intermediate transitional stage is objectively necessary, in which neither private nor public ownership of the means of production exists. This seems illogical and impossible. However, if we consider that property is not a holistic phenomenon but consists of three components: ownership, disposal, and use, then the division of these three powers of ownership among different social groups allows for a natural transition between a class and a classless society. This article examines how this process was successfully implemented in countries striving to build socialism, primarily in the USSR and now in the PRC, and offers predictions about the future course of this process worldwide.*

**Keywords:** socialism, means of production, property, possession, disposal, use, classes and strata, last stage of capitalism.

**Author:** Doctor of Engineering Sciences, Professor, Senior Researcher National Historical and Architectural Museum "Kiev Fortress" Ukraine.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Considering the unjust organization of the society in which they lived, many thinkers conceived of a better, more just system. This has always been the case, at least since Plato. But during the period of intense capitalist transformations in Western European society (particularly in the first half of the 19th century), living conditions for the majority of the population became truly unbearable. This particularly intensified dreams of a better future, which came to be known as socialism. The "founders of socialism," according to F. Engels, were the "great utopians" K. A. Saint-Simon, C. Fourier, and R. Owen. However, "every utopian is a convinced supporter of the theory of the absolutely good nature of man, which lacks only a definition of goals; historical conditions are ignored or considered secondary" [1]. They sought to provide just that.

M. Weber already pointed out that a utopian concept is always an act of confrontation between the thinker and the world, for it creates tension between actual existence and ideal being, generates hope for a better future, creating essential prerequisites for specific social actions aimed at bringing the real world into line with an a priori given ideal [2]. But the socialism (or the first stage of communism), which K. Marx and F. Engels had in mind, was not a *project*, but a *forecast-in* accordance with the laws of development of society. For, according to Marx, "people make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, under circumstances which they themselves have not chosen, but which are immediately present, given to them and have

passed on from the past" [3, V. 8, P. 119]. The scientific analysis of these conditions and their development is precisely reflected in Marxist theory, the conclusions of which, in particular, assumed the inevitability of replacing capitalism with socialism [4].

Defenders of capitalism, on the contrary, have always fought against the development of socialist theory. The Marxist scientific approach was particularly repulsive to them. They did everything possible to prevent its further development. This included constant attempts to exclude, even by force, discussion of this issue. In 1949, Albert Einstein concluded his article "Why Socialism?" with two theses: "Clarity regarding the goals and problems of socialism is of the greatest importance in our time of transition" and "At present, free and unhindered discussion of these problems is under a powerful taboo" [5]. The processes of transition continue to gather momentum, but the situation noted by Einstein is changing slowly. The need for discussion is even increasing, while the "powerful taboo" on questions related to socialism remains largely intact. However, this primarily concerns "clarity regarding the goals and problems of socialism" in its scientific aspect. This does not prevent the widespread dissemination of popular ideas about socialism, which usually barely reflect its characteristic features, even in the first approximation. Today, the most common conception in the West is of socialism as a system of state measures in the social sphere that do not touch on issues of production (that would be "communism"!).

Therefore, for example, in the United States, not only are there quite a few people who consider themselves supporters of socialism, but also, in general, "the Overton window for how much socialism Americans want is steadily shifting to the left." It is believed that "a little socialism (government using some of the money produced by capitalism and extracted from it through taxes) is necessary for capitalism to exist." Moreover, "in the end, capitalism cannot exist without a little socialism and the middle class cannot exist meaningfully without *a lot* of socialism, as the New Deal and the Great Society demonstrated,"

and it was "socialism that built the vast edifice of American prosperity over the last century" [6]. This, of course, ignores the fact that throughout the "last century" (as well as before), the United States, along with other Western countries, shamelessly robbed the rest of the world, and precisely through this and not through taxes extracted from "its own capitalism," organizing handouts ("socialism"!) for its "middle class." However, even now, the United States itself produces *only half* of what it consumes; the rest is "obtained" *from abroad* in various ways [7, 8]. So, reserves for "American-style socialism" still exist.

## II. DISCUSSIONS OF SOCIALISM

Nevertheless, the crisis of the current unequal international (intercivilizational, global) division of labor and with it the crisis of capitalism as a socioeconomic formation based on it, still demands a serious consideration of the socialist perspective. Consequently, attitudes toward socialism are gradually beginning to shift in academic circles around the world. Even on Wikipedia networks, "we find that the global network opinion favors socialism, communism for all 6 editions" [9]. Accordingly, more and more scholarly works are appearing on this topic, including a number of articles devoted to specific problems of socialism. First of all, we note the frequently heard, correct assertion of the impasse of the Western bourgeois model of society, confirmed by all historical practice. The goal of the current global dictatorship of the imperialist powers, led by the United States, is to prolong the dominance of the "golden billion" over the exploited periphery, forever doomed to economic and social degradation. Only socialism can provide a real, rather than reactionary, utopian alternative to American-style globalism and the "new world order," and create the conditions for realizing the "concept of one world and one planet" [10]. Therefore, the problems of socialism are attracting an increasing number of researchers. Numerous theoretical "models" of socialism have existed and continue to exist, raising ongoing debate. It is not without reason that the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines the concept of "socialism" as "a rich tradition of political thought and practice, the

history of which contains a vast number of views and theories, often differing in many of their conceptual, empirical, and normative commitments" [11].

Even where socialism became a reality, the perception of it was far from unambiguous. In relation to socialism in the USSR, even proponents of the socialist path of development were divided into numerous currents, which, however, if we exclude minor points, fit quite clearly into three main frameworks. According to the *first*, the USSR undoubtedly had a socialist system. It had many positive features, although it was not without certain shortcomings. Over time, for a variety of reasons, both internal and external, these shortcomings intensified, leading to the crisis of socialism. The *second* model also doesn't deny the presence of socialism there, but not genuine socialism, with "distortions." Proponents of this view believe that it wasn't "true" socialism, but rather some kind of "feudal," "barracks," "bureaucratic," or some other kind of socialism. In the future, it would be necessary to learn from these mistakes and, this time, build "true" socialism ("democratic," "humane," "with a human face," etc.). And finally, according to the third model, there was no socialism at all in the USSR, because its most essential attributes were absent. Therefore, the task of building socialism must begin anew (of course, capitalizing on the positive aspects that did exist). Moreover, a number of previous problems would first need to be resolved.

It would seem that these points of view are quite different, yet, paradoxically, they are based on common foundations: *utopianism* and *anti-historicism*. Indeed, when defining the essence of a real social system, in all these cases they use a certain (often quite different) set of "characteristic features" of socialism, given *a priori*. Comparing these with reality (the accuracy of which often leaves much to be desired) allows proponents of these views to draw conclusions about both the presence of socialism and its "quality." However, a growing number of countries worldwide consider themselves to be under a socialist system. And these countries are developing their own views on the essence of socialism. Socialism is generally

interpreted as a system in which collective interests and control over the economy prevail over private interests. The goal of socialism is the elimination of exploitation and the achievement of equality. However, the specific interpretations of socialism in Soviet scientific literature and in capitalist countries differ significantly.

In the classical Marxist interpretation, the means to achieving these goals is the abolition of private ownership of the means of production—since for socialism as a classless society, "the transformation of private property into public property is the first prerequisite for the abolition of classes" (The Communist Manifesto). To achieve this, nationalization was envisioned as a transitional measure, with public (collective) ownership eventually envisioned. In the Soviet Union, state and cooperative-collective ownership existed (the 1936 Constitution), but subsequently, strict priority of state ownership of the means of production prevailed: "The means of production are the property of the entire people—state property (all-Union and republican)" (the 1977 Constitution). Academic works have primarily sought to theoretically substantiate this factual position.

In post-Soviet publications, the approach to defining the most important characteristics of socialism has changed significantly. This primarily concerns issues related to the ownership of the means of production. Although the post-Soviet tradition retained, to a certain extent, an emphasis on centralized planning and "rigid" forms of ownership, it increasingly accepted that "the socialization of property does not preclude a formal multi-structured system, provided that commodity-money relations are supplanted and workers' self-government is strengthened" [12]. Attempts are being made to synthesize the Soviet experience with new realities, while maintaining an emphasis on socialization and spiritual orientation. A return to the idea of socialization is taking place, but with due consideration for the "historical mistakes" of the USSR. Flexible models are being sought: state + self-government, socially responsible private ownership, a combination of Marxist elements with national specifics,

traditional communal ownership (within the framework of the Russian idea), etc. [13].

Western "democratic socialism" allows for a combination of private and public ownership. "Socialism is possible with a plurality of forms of ownership, including private ownership, provided there is public control and limitations on market power" [14]. That is, the primary emphasis is on democratic control, the redistribution of wealth, and social justice. "Socialism is possible as a system in which power over the means of production is democratized-through cooperatives, state corporations or community institutions" [15]. Specific Chinese notions of socialism ("socialism with Chinese characteristics") deserve special mention (see, for example, [16]; but we will return to this issue below).

So far, utopian tendencies prevail in the discussion of problems related to possible forms of socialism, with the idea of it largely being the result of the social *design* of this system from those elements that appeal to the authors of such projects, presenting them as desirable. However, the development of society does not take into account anyone's wishes or assessments, but proceeds according to its inherent *laws*. Therefore, it makes sense to imagine future society not as a *desirable project*, but as a *forecast* based on an analysis of the actual process of its development, determined by the objective laws of social movement. These laws have already been realized in previous social processes and will determine future ones as well. And, of course, it is desirable to consider the existing experience of socialist construction and the functioning of real socialism.

### 2.1 Scientific and Technological Progress and Social Development

Human society has undergone numerous significant changes in its development. Chief among these was the transition from a primitive (egalitarian) society, which lacked what was later called the *social division of labor*, to a class society, for which such a division of labor is its most characteristic feature. This transition, like subsequent socioeconomic changes, was driven by

the development of social productive forces. The growth of knowledge and its embodiment in the advancement of tools and technologies increased the productivity of each individual. However, at a certain point, the *individual's* limited ability to personally master these advances became insufficient for each member of society to utilize *all* of their existing knowledge and skills. This is when the so-called social division of labor emerged. Initially, this involved the *specialization* of producers' labor functions (the "horizontal" division of labor), but with further scientific and technological progress, a social division of production participants into *executors* and *organizers*-the "vertical" division of labor-occurred, with the eventual formation of corresponding social groups (classes) [17]. The transition from one state to another, due to its fundamental nature, constituted an entire epoch (the period of the commune).

Class society, as a result of scientific and technological progress, which significantly influenced the specific nature of the division of labor, also underwent certain social changes in its development. The most important here was the gradual transfer of two of the three fundamental production functions (*direct action* on the object of labor to change it, the *supply of energy* for this transformation and *control* over the process) from human individuals to the forces of nature. Therefore, "in all formations, at certain stages of their development, a technological revolution occurred, expressed in the transfer to technology of new production functions previously performed exclusively by humans" [18]. Quantitative changes led to qualitative changes, as a result of which socio-economic formations in the development of society replaced each other-*slavery*, *feudalism*, *capitalism*. However, the third function always remained entirely with humans.

Due to its global nature, capitalism, over the half-millennium of its existence, has achieved scientific and technological progress at an increasing rate. And the moment has arrived when it has become possible to transfer the third production function (*control*) to technical devices. Initially, these were isolated automation tools, but now, thanks to *artificial intelligence*, the prospect has opened up

of *completely* transferring this *production* function from humans to the means of production. Such a transfer not only changes the nature of the division between so-called "mental" and "physical" labor, but ultimately leads to the elimination of this division altogether, due to the complete transfer of the function of managing the *direct* impact on the means of production from humans to technical devices. And consequently, to the end of the class form of society, having *fully fulfilled its functions* in social development.

This process is objective, independent of the will of people. But it is realized through their activity, which is precisely controlled by their will. Social *ideology* provides direction for this activity. And ideology, at its core, reflects the socio-economic interests of the ruling class. It is shaped by production relations and is intended to convince all strata of society that the organization of society that exists in these interests is the most just and natural. Ideology determines the nature of people's actions in accordance with its norms. In other words, there is an interdependence between scientific and technological progress, the development of productive forces, the social division of labor, production relations and ideology.

The interaction between them is characterized by a highly inertial nature. Therefore, all transitions between socio-economic formations have been significantly extended over time and characterized by transformations with a gradual shift in form. But this is especially true for fundamental social changes-the transition of society between its *fundamentally different* states-class and classless. Therefore, the first transition (the period of the commune) lasted for millennia. Today, social change has accelerated significantly, but even today, a direct transition from capitalism to a classless, egalitarian society (Marx called it communism) cannot be instantaneous and requires a certain transition period.

## 2.2 The Social Function of Socialism

Let us briefly summarize what was said above about the laws governing the succession of socio-economic formations. It all begins with the

constant, spontaneous development of knowledge and the refinement of production tools and technology (i.e., *scientific and technological progress*). This process leads to the *development of society's means of production*, with a corresponding improvement in production processes. This, in turn, results in new forms of *social division of labor*, defining *new relationships between people in the production process*. At the center of this entire process is the "vertical" (social) division of labor, expressed in the forms of *ownership of the means of production* (and consequently, in the relations of "domination and subordination"). Therefore, during the transition from a classless society to a class society, and vice versa, these relationships undergo a *fundamental* shift: in the former, they emerge, while in the latter, they virtually *disappear*. And today, this is the primary task that *socialism* must fulfill.

Perhaps the main misconception in prevailing notions of socialism is the idea that "the fundamental value of socialism is justice" [19]. According to Wikipedia, "Justice is a concept of what is due, which requires conformity between action and reward: in particular, the conformity between rights and duties, work and reward, merit and recognition, crime and punishment, and the conformity between the roles of various social strata, groups, and individuals in society and their social position within it." Utopian socialists were precisely those who called for justice. But the point is that society consists precisely of "*different* strata and groups" occupying different "social positions" because they perform *different* functions in society. And their members, accordingly, have *different* interests and corresponding notions of what is due. Therefore, their understandings of justice *differ significantly*, and sometimes radically. Consequently, justice as a criterion of the "quality" of social relations (apart from its specific interpretation in jurisprudence) is objectively devoid of any meaning.

But if justice is not the main characteristic of socialism, then why is it needed at all? Because it represents a state of society that objectively connects two fundamentally different states-the

current class system and the future classless system. The main difference between socio-economic systems lies in the forms of ownership of the means of production, since they determine the roles played in social production by the social groups included within it. Current society, with its "vertical" division of labor, primarily consists of various socio-economic groups (classes) with different interests, but in a classless society, in which this division of labor is eliminated, differences in *this regard* will also disappear. This means that *private* property, characteristic of any class society, will be replaced by what is usually called public property. And since these are *fundamentally* different states of society, the transition between them requires a state of society whose *special properties* ensure this transition.

Since socialism is a society in which there is no exploiting class, its emergence signifies the abolition of private property. However, as F. Engels wrote in *The Principles of Communism*, it is "impossible to eliminate private property outright, just as it is impossible to immediately increase the existing productive forces to the extent necessary for the creation of a social economy" [3, Vol. 4, P. 332]. This is precisely what the special nature of the organization of society-socialism (or, according to Marx, the first phase of communism)-is *objectively* designed for. Its main distinguishing feature is the *unique nature* of property relations in the means of production.

Failure to understand this *unique nature* of property relations under socialism leads to meaningless assertions such as: "The victory of socialist movements in a number of colonial countries from 1945 to 1960, primarily in China, led to the emergence of political regimes that combine the principles of the socialist, capitalist, and feudal modes of production" [19]. In fact, any "combination of principles" between *heterogeneous* socio-economic formations based on *diametrically opposed* ideologies is *fundamentally* impossible: a "struggle for dominance" will inevitably arise between them. This is especially true when the goal is to build a classless society. For while during periods of change within a class society, only the form of

private property changes, between it and the extremes of the sequence, fundamental changes occur: first, public property gives way to private property, and then vice versa. Since public and private property require fundamentally different *ideologies* to function, and a directly opposed socio-psychological atmosphere, they *cannot coexist in principle*. On the other hand, such a radical change simply cannot occur instantly (or even in a "short transition period"). The only solution is a relatively lengthy transition period, during which *neither private nor public property exists*.

### 2.3 On the Essence of Property Relations

The classics of Marxism always emphasized that property is *not a relationship between people and its object* (in this case, the means of production), but a relationship *between people regarding* said object. That is, it is not a material phenomenon, but an ideal one, existing in people's *consciousness*. Consequently, it is impossible to imagine the *coexistence in a person's consciousness* (unless they are schizophrenic), and therefore the simultaneous functioning in society of property relations that are *the same* for all its members (i.e., public), and property relations that are *different* for each individual (i.e., private). Therefore, socialism, with its *unique* property relations, serves precisely to facilitate *the transition* from a class society with private ownership of the means of production to a classless society with public ownership (or, more precisely, with the virtual absence of such a specific relationship between people regarding the means of production), precisely what distinguishes it from previous socio-economic formations-as well as from the classless society that follows.

But before turning to the problems of property under socialism, a few words should be said about property relations over the means of production in general. Initially, the means of production in society belonged to everyone and to no one in particular. However, as a result of the development of the division of labor, certain groups of individuals began to perform functions that changed their relationships with other groups

alienated from the means of production. The specific nature of alienation depends on the socio-economic relations that exist in a given historical period. However, in principle, the types of alienation can only correspond to the types of appropriation that can exist at all. With regard to property relations, social practice has identified *only three* possible types of social appropriation: 1) *the concept of the unity of subject and object*; 2) *the ability to control the functioning of the object in accordance with the will of the subject*; 3) *the ability of the subject to use (in any form) the results of the object's functioning*. In principle, these three aspects can, in each specific case, with respect to specific subjects and objects, exist *together, separately or in some combination*.

The existence of these three types of relations, as applied to the means of production, was subsequently legally enshrined in three concepts characterizing actually functioning property relations: *possession, disposal, and use*. It should be noted that these terms are primarily used today in jurisprudence, and are not generally considered to have a direct bearing on issues of property in economic terms. However, as Marx noted [3, V. 13. P. 7], property relations themselves represent merely the legal expression of certain production relations (consisting, as we have seen, in the nature of the social division of labor). Consequently, the corresponding legal terms also, in one way or another, reflect economic relations. However, during the period of the dominance of individual private property, especially under capitalism, questions related to their components, thanks to the long-established customary coincidence of the latter in object and subject, did not have any particular practical significance and were only brought to light when certain legal cases arose. However, when considering the problem of property relations as a whole, including their essence, origin and development, this point takes on a very significant significance.

The object of interest to us is the *means of production*. The subject can be either *society as a whole* or an *individual* (or a limited and clearly defined group of them). If all three relationships *coincide*, then the ownership relationship is

*integral*-i.e., in the first case, ownership is *public*, in the second, *private*. But what if not? Then the ownership relationship takes on a *divided (split)* character. However, the question arises: is such a discrepancy even possible? Not only is it possible, but it has already existed in human society (under the commune) for thousands of years. And it returns again under socialism, confusing its hapless "theorists." If we return to the first transition from public to private ownership (the commune period), then, as already noted, this occurred over a very long period. And, for example, throughout this time, ownership of the primary means of production-land-was not integral, but fragmented, with different subjects in possession, disposal, and use. The community also *owned* the land on which it lived and from which it "fed." The clan, through its governing bodies, *managed* the land plots, and transferred them to individuals (or more precisely, families) for *use*.

Prior to this, property had been public (meaning that special ownership relations over the means of production were essentially absent) for a very long time (approximately twenty thousand years), but approximately 10,000-12,000 years ago, its fragmentation began. The extremely diverse concrete forms of this fragmentation were constantly changing, bringing property ever closer to its dominance in the form of private ownership. This began approximately 5,000-6,000 years ago with the emergence of the first class society. In this case, land ownership was forcibly taken from a given agricultural community by the victorious community (usually nomads). A slave state arose, in which members of the first community became *slaves*, and those of the second became *slave owners* [20]. Last to pass was ownership (now private) of land and other means of production – initially in a group form, gradually transforming into individual ownership. This remained the case throughout the reign of class society, changing only its specific forms in accordance with the level of development of productive forces. Today, the development of productive forces has practically reached a level at which it urgently demands the *abolition of private property*. That is, the emergence of a transitional period in the form of a society known as socialism.

Like the first transitional period (community), socialism is characterized *not by holistic* (intersecting relations of ownership, disposal, and use within a single entity), but by property relations *divided* (splitting) among entities. Consequently, under socialism, as in the commune period, the main social groups are represented not by *classes*, but by *strata*. In countries where socialism has triumphed, these strata have formed differently depending on specific conditions, but in one way or another, they have assumed separate ownership, disposal, and use of the means of production.

#### 2.4 Socialism as a Socio-Economic Formation

The title of this section is not entirely accurate. The term "socio-economic formation" is commonly used to denote a class-based organization of society, with a ruling class whose members own the means of production and an oppressed class, dispossessed of this ownership and subordinate to the former, which utilizes its labor force. As already noted, socialism, based on a split form of property ownership, has no classes (although there were attempts to define the nomenklatura in the USSR as a distinct class [21]), only social groups (strata) occupying different positions in society. However, we will use this term, since a general term for this transitional period has not yet been devised.

Nevertheless, the latter has ceased to be a figment of utopian imagination and has become a *real social phenomenon* that can now be studied as something quite tangible. It should be noted, however, that this is not such a simple matter, as the forms in which socialism has existed and continues to exist are markedly diverse, stemming from the specific conditions of its emergence and functioning. But in all cases, its characteristic features, in one form or another, express the fundamental distinguishing features of this socioeconomic phenomenon. Thus, in the Soviet Union, for most of its existence, the ruling stratum, represented by the so-called nomenklatura, merely *managed* socialist property, while the state, represented by the Soviets, *owned* it and its *use* was public. A similar situation exists today in the PRC, as well as in

several other countries attempting, in one form or another, to embark on the path of socialist construction. Moreover, the *specific forms* of divided property relations vary enormously, conditioned by the differences in the specific conditions of their existence in the historical past and today.

The phenomenon of *divided property* is a *fundamental* issue for socialism. How this is realized in each specific case depends on the specific circumstances. What makes socialism in countries with different histories so unique? Each country that has achieved socialism implements its own version of property relations, and arguing about which is more correct is pointless. For, as Marx once pointed out, "the same economic basis—the same in its fundamental conditions—can, thanks to infinitely varied empirical circumstances, natural conditions, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., reveal in its manifestations endless variations and gradations that can be understood only by analyzing these empirically given circumstances" [3, V. 25. II, P. 354]. A full examination of this issue requires specialized research, which is yet to be conducted. Therefore, here we will primarily limit ourselves to a brief analysis of this social system in the form in which it first actually manifested itself and existed for a relatively long time. That is, *Soviet socialism*.

It arose in Russia as a result of the revolution led by the Bolsheviks (later communists) under the leadership of V.I. Lenin. This was not a proletarian revolution as envisioned by the classics of Marxism. It took place in a separate, comparatively backward country, primarily by peasants seeking land. Or, in the words of V.I. Lenin, "thanks to the alliance of the proletarians of city and village" [22, V. 42. P. 111]. It was not, in fact, supported by the proletariat of the "advanced countries." It was not without reason that A. Gramsci rightly called it "a revolution against Marx's "Capital"" [23]. But it endured and laid the foundation for a new socio-economic system—socialism. (We provided a fairly detailed analysis of this event earlier in our work [4]).

So, here we turn to the form of socialism that it took in the USSR. That is, to "real socialism." After all, "it is perfectly clear that without a theoretical understanding of the system that existed for almost seven decades in the form of the USSR, it is impossible to fully understand either Russian history as a whole, or the global reality of the 20th century, or post-Soviet society, since it is the result of the decomposition of "real socialism" [24]. True, with "theoretical understanding" the situation was not very favorable, since even the General Secretary of the CPSU had reason to declare: "To be frank, we still have not adequately studied the society in which we live and work, have not fully revealed its inherent patterns, especially economic ones. Therefore, at times we are forced to act, so to speak, empirically, by a very irrational method of trial and error" [25].

First of all, the revolution changed the form of property *ownership*. According to Engels, "the first act in which the state truly acts as the representative of the whole (!) of society is the seizure of the means of production in the name of society" [3, V. 20. P. 291]. At the same time, as Lenin believed at the time, "all citizens are transformed here into hired employees of the state, which is the armed workers" [22, V. 33. P. 101]. With the liquidation of the exploiting classes, the nature of the use of the means of production also changed: socialist property, converted, in Lenin's words, "to the benefit of the entire people" [22, V. 35. P. 192], was ultimately used by this state to provide the means of subsistence for the country's population.

The situation was more complex with the *management* of property, as the most active component of property relations, dependent on the nature of the *social division of labor*, which also determines the nature of production relations. The right to *dispose* of property (the means of production) is the right to determine the specific nature of their functioning, i.e., *the production process itself*. However, the material means of production are not inherently endowed with the capacity for independent functioning. They are set in motion by human individuals

through the application of their labor power. Therefore, in a certain sense, "property is the disposal of someone else's labor power" [3, Vol. 3, p. 31]. This is precisely what determines the leading role of the disposal of the means of production.

Initially, the disposal of the means of production was local and fragmented. It was carried out through self-governing bodies-*Soviets*, created primarily on the basis of *enterprises*. In other words, it did not yet reflect the *common interests* of even the *workers as a whole*, let alone their entire population, but only their individual production associations. And the workers, in Lenin's words, "inherited from capitalism... an inability, an unaccustomedness to collective, solidarity-based work" [22, Vol. 36, p. 169]. Nevertheless, in the first years of "war communism," the situation regarding the management of the means of production confiscated from the capitalists was precisely this: the primary objective was simply to survive. The new managers' poor preparation for this function was partially compensated for by the forced involvement of former owners, technical specialists and other managers in production management under workers' control (to a certain extent, this truly amounted to a "dictatorship of the proletariat").

### 2.5 Management of the Means of Production in the USSR

The old ideology proved to be a crucial factor in the development of new production relations. As constructive objectives gradually came to the fore, syndicalism within the proletariat became the main obstacle to their solution [22, Vol. 39, P. 309]. It became clear that bourgeois ideology was tenacious and, until the victory of new socio-economic relations, self-perpetuated, including within the working class. With the victory of the socialist revolution, a situation arose in which a potential barrier arose in the development of society, created, in Lenin's words, by "old prejudices that chain the worker to the old world" [22, Vol. 43, P. 308], and when, consequently, socio-economic transformations had to be largely

carried out by Soviet power against the influence of socio-psychological factors.

The absence of corresponding socio-economic relations in their entirety precluded any hope of working-class *self-organization* in the production process. A new vertical social division of labor was required: a *special apparatus* proved necessary for the effective *management* of all the means of production. And then, not the entire proletariat as a mass (as had been assumed by theory), but only a certain "vanguard of the proletariat took the construction of power into its own hands." A "dictatorship of the revolutionary elements (!) of the class" began to be established [22, Vol. 39, Pp. 295, 267], and, above all, *their management of the means of production*. There occurred "the separation of the revolutionary and only revolutionary, part of the proletariat into the party, and the same part of the party into its leading centers" [22, Vol. 41, P. 448].

Accordingly, the place of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a "self-organizing mass" is taken by the dictatorship of that relatively *narrow group of people* who "separated" themselves into the aforementioned "leading centers" organized into a *hierarchical* structure—that is, the party, economic and administrative stratum—the *nomenklatura*, which became the *dominant social group* (stratum). Under these conditions, it was precisely political power, the *dictatorship of the "revolutionary vanguard"*, professing *socialist ideology*, that could lead society to that point in socioeconomic development from which socialist consciousness among the masses would develop automatically, based on existing socialist socioeconomic relations.

Thus, a special social group was formed that, *in its entirety*, assumed the most important social function—the *management of socialist property* (the main means of production). This positively changed the socioeconomic situation. However, there were also significant shortcomings. Shared social functions inevitably led to the formation of common interests among its members, strengthening the cohesion of a particular social group. This later led to a significant change in the nature of its functioning. In fact, from the very

beginning, V.I. Lenin noted the negative aspects associated with both the special common interests of this social group and its actual composition. On the one hand, he understood that "we cannot live without this apparatus; all branches of administration create the need for such an apparatus" [22, Vol. 36, P. 169]. On the other hand, he saw that, due to a shortage of trained personnel, "our state apparatus... is to a large extent a relic of the old, least subjected to any serious changes" [22, Vol. 45, P. 383]. But he believed that the situation could and should be rectified by strengthening workers' control.

One way or another, despite all the shortcomings, the second period of socialist development in the USSR (after the brief era of "war communism") began. Individual enterprises were managed by party committees, under the direction of their protégés (the party nomenklatura). This means that, in state-owned industrial enterprises with "public" ownership, day-to-day affairs were effectively "commanded" by party committees at various levels (primarily through their leaders). But even in agriculture (where a certain "collective ownership" was believed to exist), they were also managed by the nomenklatura, represented by the same party organization leadership. Regarding this, I.V. Stalin wrote: "Party organizations will have to continue, for a definite short period, to be closely involved in agricultural affairs with all their minutiae—plowing, sowing, harvesting, etc." [26, Vol. 14, P. 175]. And so they did, down to the "minutiae," but not for a "short period."

However, such "command" was not at all the main factor in the management of socialist property. A far more important role was played by *centralized* management instruments, allowing the nomenklatura as a whole, as a strictly organized leading social group of Soviet society, to manage the entire national economy of the country as a *single entity*. First and foremost, this was the central planning body, Gosplan, which generated the corresponding *orders for economic bodies throughout the country*. The main task of Gosplan was "the development of a single national economic plan, the methods and procedures for its implementation" [27, pp. 203, 204]. "The organization and organizational procedures of

planning were developed at Gosplan of the USSR and were constantly improved. This is an extremely important element,... involving huge masses of specialists in this process. Indeed, virtually all enterprises in the country participated in the development of national economic plans, submitting their proposals to the relevant ministries and they in turn to Gosplan of the USSR. But this was preceded by extensive work by the Government of the USSR and Gosplan of the USSR." Its task was also to "take into account the balance of financial resources" [28].

It is well known that Gosplan directly determined the direction of development, its pace, the volume and proportions of the national economy, and so on. However, much less well-known is another instrument that guaranteed the strict implementation of these plans and the country's sustainable development. This was the so-called "dual-circuit monetary circulation," which ensured *financial control* over the activities of enterprises and the functioning of the entire national economy by managing the circulation of so-called "non-cash money." Dual-circuit monetary circulation was not simply different representations of *the same money*-cash and non-cash (as is the case today, for example)-but two *fundamentally different* forms of its existence, each fulfilling its own special and specific functions in solving the overall problem.

This is how it was perceived at the time. "A mandatory (!) condition for planning monetary circulation is a clear distinction between the spheres of non-cash and cash circulation, which takes place in a socialist economy. Thanks to this distinction, the Soviet state is able to directly determine those monetary transactions that require cash. Cash circulation encompasses the following areas of monetary relations: payments from enterprises and organizations to the population (wages, collective farm workers' wages for workdays, pensions, etc.); payments from the population to state and cooperative enterprises and organizations for goods and services; payments to the financial system (taxes, loan payments, repayments of loans for individual housing construction, deposits in savings banks, etc.); payments from one population group to

another, primarily through collective farm trade. A strict distinction between the spheres of cash and non-cash circulation does not, however, exclude a close relationship between these spheres. Enterprises' and organizations' funds for sold products are credited non-cash to their settlement and current accounts with the State Bank. The withdrawal of funds from these accounts for the payment of wages is made in cash. However, despite such a close connection between cash and non-cash payments, non-cash payments cannot directly influence the volume of money in circulation" [29].

Something similar took place and continues to take place in socialist China. There, too, the State Planning Committee initially functioned-as long as ownership of the means of production remained state and collective. And then, "with the CPC Central Committee's deepening understanding of the capital patterns in the socialist system, capital-related policies have undergone a developmental journey through several stages-from the negation and elimination of capital to the support and operation of capital and finally to the stage of regulating and guiding capital" [16].

Currently, another body of state economic governance operates in the PRC-the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). It is one of the key institutions of Chinese central government at the ministerial level, subordinate to the State Council and the Communist Party of China. The main functions of this body (with an emphasis on how it interacts with private capital and the private sector) are: the formation of strategies for national socio-economic development; macroeconomic regulation and management; project planning and evaluation; industrial policy, etc. [30]. Of course, the specific forms of governance here differ quite significantly from those that existed in the Soviet Union, but in the context of the PRC they reliably ensure the disposal of all means of production in the country by its Communist Party, regardless of formal property relations. A similar situation, in one form or another, exists in other countries that have proclaimed the construction of socialism.

## 2.6 Division of Labor Under Socialism

With the establishment of Soviet power, the exploiting classes were eliminated, meaning the nature of *the social division of labor* changed significantly. At the same time, as we have seen, the most important authority in ownership of the means of production under socialism is assigned to a *specific social group*. Therefore, the "vertical" division of labor into managers and executors remains. However, it differs from previous forms in the question of who *owns* and *uses* the means of production. While in previous systems, the rights of owner and user were primarily assigned to certain *ruling individuals*, under socialism, priority in this respect is, in one way or another, given to the *entire population of the country*. In principle, the problem of the division of labor under socialism was quite significant and greatly occupied Soviet researchers of this system. However, their attempts to resolve it were hampered by incorrect notions about the "vertical" division of labor. The vertical division of labor is not so much a technological phenomenon (like the horizontal division of labor) as a social one. In a certain sense, it was practically equated with what the classics of Marxism called the division of "physical" and "mental" labor, which was only partially true.

In essence, when discussing the division of labor in production, what is meant is not whether it is performed "mentally" or "physically," but rather its place within the structure of the production process—in a group of managers or *performers*. Both types of labor presuppose the inclusion of both cognitive and physiological processes in individuals. But they are different in nature. We examined this point in detail in [28]. Here, we will only briefly outline the essence of the process. The human information system essentially consists of two subsystems: the individual (figurative) and the social (symbolic), which arises from the unification of the latter with the corresponding individual subsystems of other people through material information carriers. While constituting *a single system* in the process of functioning (thinking) in the individual consciousness, it nevertheless includes two types of thinking: *practical* thinking and *theoretical* thinking. The

first is associated with the individual's *direct* actions in relation to external objects to *achieve practical results*, while the second, in interaction with other individuals, contributes to an *understanding* of the essence of these objects *in order to formulate a program of action* that takes into account the interests of the entire society. This is a direct result of the practical and theoretical thinking of any individual.

However, as society developed, these two elements, along with their bearers, became divided into managers and implementers. This determines the structure of class society. Under socialism, this division still persists, but with significant adjustments. In the economic sphere, this was expressed in a corresponding change in *the subject of control* over the means of production. This transition proved extremely painful, as new tasks required a corresponding shift in orientation, which is extremely difficult for active participants in the process, and for some, downright impossible. Only thanks to the genius of Lenin, who practically intuitively determined the required direction of development, was his will and authority able to emerge from the crisis with relatively minor losses (although for the communists themselves, these losses resulted in the loss of almost a third of the party's membership).

In the second stage of socialist development, while its collectivist nature remained and deepened, its fundamental socioeconomic characteristics underwent significant changes. With the shift in the vertical division of labor, ownership of the primary means of production changed first and foremost. As for *ownership*, property remained state-owned, although the nature of the state changed—state power shifted from the "armed workers" (the dictatorship of the proletariat) to the "governing centers" (which continued to be slyly referred to as the "dictatorship of the proletariat"). On the other hand, due to the gradual increase in social homogeneity within Soviet society, the nationwide nature of *use* only strengthened. However, the situation with control was different. The organization of production, objectively aimed at the further development of socialism, was possible

only through the *dictatorship* of a relatively narrow group of functionaries, united by a common ideology, discipline and organization, in a context in which socialist ideology had not yet fully formed among the masses.

No, the peculiar "nomenklatura class" it formed did not transform into a true social class in the usual sense, since it could only *dispose* of the means of production (not own or use them). However, it was precisely due to this latter circumstance that the nomenklatura became the dominant stratum of socialist society, "responsible" for the material conditions of production. Another stratum of this era, "responsible" for the personal factor of production, became those commonly called «workers» (workers, peasants, and the technical intelligentsia). And there was no "working class," "collective peasantry," or "laboring intelligentsia" that officially represented the structure of Soviet society. All of these, naturally, existed and had their own characteristics and interests, but they were merely subdivisions of a given stratum with specific labor functions. In other words, they represented a specific version of the horizontal (technological) division of labor. And relative to the ruling stratum—the nomenklatura—they all found themselves in an identically subordinate position, and together they created, together, a structure of vertical (social) division of labor.

This social structure ensured highly effective economic and cultural development for the country. Moreover, initially, the fundamental interests of the dominant social group (the nomenklatura) largely coincided with the fundamental, deep-seated interests of the majority of the people, since socialism had significantly improved their situation. Margaret Thatcher, so respected by Western adherents, said in her Houston report on the collapse of the USSR: "The Soviet Union was a country that posed a serious threat to the Western world. I'm not talking about a military threat. In essence, there was none. Our countries were sufficiently armed, including with nuclear weapons. I mean an economic threat. Thanks to the planned policy and a peculiar combination of moral and material incentives, the Soviet Union managed to achieve

high economic performance. Its gross national product growth rate was roughly twice as high as in our countries" [32].

Thanks in large part to the active work of the nomenklatura, rapid and successful development was achieved in the national economy, as well as in science, culture, education, and other fields. In a very short time, the country was transformed from a backward semi-colony into a powerful industrial power with a developed technosphere and noosphere. Moreover, this development was achieved through its own resources, not by plundering other countries, as Western countries had done for centuries. Socialist China is now demonstrating similar successes (it's worth mentioning that it is the only country in the world where food prices are falling, not rising).

It is also important that, thanks to this organization of the national economy, the USSR effectively avoided participation in the international capitalist division of labor in its vertical form. I.V. Stalin formulated this in his report to the 14th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): "We must structure our economy in such a way that our country does not become an appendage of the world capitalist system, that it is not included in the general system of capitalist development as its subsidiary enterprise, that our state develops not as a subsidiary enterprise of world capitalism, but as an independent economic unit, relying primarily on the domestic market" [26, Vol. 7, P. 298]. Which, in fact, was successfully achieved.

Of course, the horizontal "hypostasis" (which today's adherents of capitalism essentially only imply by the international division of labor; it is not customary to mention the vertical) was preserved. Trade relations with the West, albeit with significant difficulties, gradually developed; a significant number of American, German, and other bourgeois specialists actively participated in the industrialization of the USSR; scientists interned in Western scientific laboratories, and cultural ties were established. But at the same time, Soviet science, technology, and education were rapidly developing, making the Soviet Union increasingly *self-sufficient*. This prevented the

West from completely bringing it under its control.

### 2.7 The Historical Fate of "Real Socialism"

During the period of Soviet socialism, socioeconomic relations in the country changed considerably—from the first attempts to introduce a "dictatorship of the proletariat" to the *counterrevolution* seven decades later with the restoration of private property. However, the aforementioned characteristic features of the socioeconomic structure (the fragmented ownership relations over the means of production), to which socialism in the USSR owed its aforementioned successes, remained largely unchanged for most of its existence.

However, compared to other socioeconomic formations that have already passed the main stages of formation, development, and, in part, elimination, socialism, including its Soviet variant, has not yet reached the end of its journey. Any social phenomenon goes through three stages: formation, the revelation of its fundamental properties, and completion with preparation for the transition to another state. If we consider Soviet socialism, it only completed two stages of its existence, as it failed to achieve the third (final) stage due to the overwhelming pressure of global imperialism. And socialism undoubtedly still has yet to pass through it. But what this stage will be, we can only *speculate* for now, based on existing experience and some preliminary considerations. In particular, on the considerations expressed by V.I. Lenin in his article "On Cooperation."

This article is important, above all, because, in Lenin's own opinion, it truly represented "a radical change in our entire view of socialism." For the first time in Marxist literature, based on the notion of a socialist country as a *single factory*, it effectively recognized a separate *collective*—in the form of a cooperative—as the basic economic entity of the new society. Lenin understood perfectly well and repeatedly emphasized that "cooperatives in the context of a capitalist state are a collective capitalist institution." Nevertheless, he believed that there

was a way out of this situation: "And there is only one way out—the merger of cooperation with Soviet power" [22, Vol. 45, pp. 376, 374], in which the *production collective* becomes the fundamental *structural component* of socialist society. This means not a capitalist cooperation with individual shares, but a socialist one, with the obligatory integrating role of the state through its ownership of the means of production. It is in this sense that Lenin consistently develops the views on cooperation of the founders of Marxism—but this time based on the experience gained in socialist construction, taking into account the actual formation of *new*, previously non-existent social entities—*collectives*.

This latter point represents a crucial, fundamental point, one that "fundamentally" distinguishes Lenin's view, including from the "dreams" of numerous past and present supporters of "cooperative socialism." For here, a completely different kind of social division of labor will take place. It can be assumed that this stage, as with the previous stages of socialism, will be characterized not by some kind of "collective ownership," but by the same split in property relations based on ownership, disposal, and use. However, in the third stage, the implementation of property relations will most likely be realized through state ownership, public use, and collective disposal of the means of production. The most characteristic feature of the coming socialism will be its significant democratization, with a strengthening of the economic role of work collectives. Through a democratically formed work collective council, it will manage the *enterprise's* means of production, which are under its full economic control — but not ownership. These will be owned by the state through the system of Soviets.

This "system of civilized cooperators with public ownership of the means of production... is the system of socialism" [22, V. 45. P. 373], or rather, its final stage. Maximum independence for enterprises, whose work collectives control the means of production, with the integrating role of the socialist state, which owns them, represented by a hierarchical system of democratically elected Soviets. The latter will also ensure their general

public use. This is the basis for production relations in the upcoming third and final stage of socialism. Marx himself once spoke of the coming society as "based on the principles of collectivism" [3, Vol. 19, P. 18]; incidentally, China has also long considered its "fundamental foundation to be collectivism" [33]. The primary structural element of this new society will be *collectives*. Through development and international integration, they will ultimately potentially form a *single human society* with a complete absence of any *stratification*, as well as any *social* division of labor-communism.

The situation in the USSR was practically ready for a gradual transition to the third stage by the end of the 1930s. But it never arrived. And the reason for this was the same nomenklatura that had once ensured its success. The fact is that, over the years of the USSR's existence, the nomenklatura had actually *changed*. Even before, it had been reluctant to relinquish its right to manage property, transferring it to collectives of workers. After all, doing so would have deprived it of its exceptional social status. But initially, it included people selflessly devoted to the communist idea, hardened by prisons and exile, who had personally carried out and defended the revolution. However, over the years, other people joined it. Now they were *co-opted* into this social group in accordance with its demands. And these demands gradually shifted from appropriate ideological and businesslike qualities to adherence to common interests and the strict implementation of the will of the higher authorities.

The events of 1937 resulted from internal contradictions within the nomenklatura. The international situation also contributed to this. Then came the war, the post-war reconstruction period, the Cold War... The acute illness of society became chronic. Socialism never reached the next stage of development; a period of decay began. The nomenklatura, meanwhile, became increasingly "embourgeoisified," increasingly seeking to control property, adding *ownership* and *use* to it. To this end, it carried out a coup d'état, or more accurately, a *counterrevolution* ("perestroika"), betraying everything it

supposedly revered. The development of socialism in the USSR was interrupted. The country, historically speaking, regressed to the miserable semi-colonial state of "*dependent capitalism*".

But what the Soviet Union had accomplished during its existence was not in vain. The USSR clearly demonstrated the possibility of abolishing capitalism and building and successfully operating a "post-capitalist" (socialist) social system. It significantly contributed to the elimination of the colonial system in its "classical" form in the world; at the cost of enormous sacrifices, the USSR prevented the domination of the most reactionary form of capitalism on the planet-fascism (Nazism), and also contributed to a very significant degree to the implementation and protection of certain revolutionary transformations in a number of countries (this is especially true of the Chinese revolution).

## 2.8 Current Global Social Processes and Socialism

But the most important thing in the world today is that the form of capitalist global vertical division of labor (i.e., the centuries-long relationship between exploiting and exploited civilizations), which still dominates the planet, is gradually becoming obsolete through "natural" means. The *final stage* of the international vertical division of labor under capitalism has effectively begun to slowly but surely emerge. But, according to the general law of system development, while essentially a product of this very system and shaped by the laws of capitalism *itself*, it is nonetheless already beginning to "work" not so much to strengthen, but ultimately to *destroy*, this socio-economic system. For, in the words of Marx, "capitalist production necessarily generates its own negation as a natural process" [3, V. 23, P. 773]. Naturally, external influences (for capitalism as a system) were also present, as a new social order-socialism-emerged in the world.

Yes, capitalism continues to develop quite significantly, although it inevitably experiences a developmental *crisis*, caused and directed, as has been said, by the *operation of its own laws*. The fact is that today, *the main growth in profits*

comes from the organization of production in "uncivilized" countries with *cheap labor*, implemented by Western capitalists. The latter are undergoing active *industrialization*. However, due to the outflow of industrial capital and declining profitability, the systematic *deindustrialization* of the "civilized" countries themselves is also inevitably occurring, leading to certain inevitable consequences for the entire capitalist division of labor. First of all, due to this redistribution of production, social stratification within the Western countries themselves is intensifying-transnational oligarchs are growing rich, while the so-called "middle class," on which the social stability of these countries was based, is shrinking in numbers and becoming poorer due to the unwillingness of large capitalists to share their profits with them. This is natural, since along with the transfer of material production to the countries of "dependent capitalism," the role of those social strata that provided the intellectual component in the "core" countries also diminishes.

For example, their leader-the United States of America-is slowly but surely transforming from a country of industrialists, engineers, and skilled workers into a country of bankers, small traders, and clerks. The same processes, although less pronounced, are occurring in other Western countries. A significant role was also played by the disruption of the global capitalist monopoly on "intellectual labor" in the "developed countries," brought about by the emergence of a new social order-socialism. Vigorous technological and cultural progress in the USSR significantly disrupted the nature of the global division of labor. The crisis of socialism there slowed this process, but it can no longer be stopped. As a result, the West has increasingly begun to lose its global monopoly on "intellectual labor," which again disrupts the previously established global division of labor. The emergence of new centers where "intellectual labor" develops, and the weakening of old ones, inevitably results in a kind of "regionalization" of the world, directly threatening the global dominance of the West in general and the United States in particular. This destroys the very foundations of the scientific and

technological base on which the capitalist vertical international division of labor, which ensures this dominance, was actually based.

Former colonies, by developing their own production, are beginning to free themselves from their semi-colonial dependence, but they will not be able to transform into Western-style capitalist countries. Western countries "built" themselves as capitalist countries through unequal economic relations, thanks to which their rates of scientific and technological development sharply increased relative to other civilizations. At the same time, as F. Braudel wrote, due to this "unequal exchange," "the division of labor on a global scale... was not an agreement between equal partners." Accordingly, "Europe was already drawing a significant share of its essence and strength from the entire world." "And it was precisely this supplement that raised it above its own level in the face of the challenges it encountered on the path of its progress" [34, P. 43, 396]. This can no longer be returned - no one will agree to tolerate exploitation on a global scale anymore. But there is no other capitalism. So, only socialism remains.

But a simultaneous transition of all countries to socialism is unlikely. The destruction of the unipolar world will not lead directly to socialism. Its first consequence, it seems, will be the regionalization of most states with mixed economies based on state capitalism. But in essence, regionalization will also mean the end of capitalism-*for it can exist only in one form-global*, representing a kind of "iceberg" in the "sea of life," with the above-water portion of the "civilized countries" and the underwater portion of everyone else. Deprived of its "support"-the ability to exploit "uncivilized countries"-the West will become just *one of* a number of disparate "ice floes." Moreover, scientific and technological progress and interaction will inevitably, gradually and effectively, eliminate the *global* "vertical" division of labor, i.e., the *international* (intercivilizational) division of "mental" and "physical" labor.

But other forms of the division of labor will remain a necessary element of the functioning of society in its individual social entities for some

time, and so it will not disappear completely. However, it will, including on a global scale, take other forms, particularly intra- and interregional cooperation-voluntary and mutually beneficial, since countries will no longer be bound by the current (*still essentially colonial*) global (read: American) financial system. Only as the human economy gradually transforms into a truly global one will the "vertical" division of labor be *abolished in the reverse order* of its origin. Even now, Western countries are rapidly losing their dominance in the system of global, unequal division of labor they created. And only after its complete decline will it be time to eliminate what Marx considered the *main contradiction of capitalism*-the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie.

And here, *socialism* will have its say. For a long time now, the socialization of production, due to the dominance of monopolies (today primarily transnational ones), has reached such a scale that, in the words of V.I. Lenin, written a hundred years ago, "monopoly capitalism is evolving into state-monopoly capitalism": after all, "if the largest capitalist enterprise becomes a monopoly, it means it serves the entire people"- albeit to the benefit of the owners of the means of production. But "socialism is nothing other than a state-capitalist monopoly, *directed to the benefit of the entire people* and, to that extent, *ceasing to be a capitalist monopoly*". This is the only path to further development, for "one cannot move forward from monopolies... without moving toward socialism" [22, V. 34. P. 191-192].

### III. CONCLUSION

Meanwhile, new centers of socialism are constantly emerging. Various countries are attempting to build a new society, experiencing both significant achievements and significant mistakes along the way. The experience of the People's Republic of China is particularly significant. Initially, the Communist Party of China, which led the process, adopted Soviet experience-both its best and worst aspects. The specific social conditions that existed in that country were particularly significant here. However, the communists in the PRC were able to

successfully utilize the Soviet experience, despite many mistakes. However, the situation gradually improved, and the advantages of socialism began to take hold. Very high rates of economic development were achieved, as a result of which China has already displaced the United States from the first place in the world in terms of production and is beginning to actively push it forward in science and technology. This is despite the fact that in China, the current phase of socialist development is considered the lowest point. In essence, they are effectively experiencing what was known in the USSR as the New Economic Policy (NEP). But China continues to successfully move along the socialist path, simultaneously serving as a significant obstacle to capitalist restoration. This also serves as an example for many other countries.

Socialism is an inevitable consequence of the collapse of the global capitalist system. It is a natural stage of social development. Objectively, its formation and development are driven by the social processes themselves in the world. Subjectively, for the development of socialism on a global scale to proceed as successfully as possible, with minimal costs and at an accelerating pace, it is highly desirable that its builders understand what they are building. In other words, a general theory of socialism must develop. And it will, of course, develop. It is hoped that this article will also make its modest contribution to this development.

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