

ON THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

By A. A. ZHDANOV

[In 1946, there appeared in the Soviet Union a textbook on *THE HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY* by Georgi Alexandrov. Although originally awarded a Stalin prize, the book evoked widespread criticism in the U.S.S.R. As a consequence the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union organized in June, 1947, a conference of philosophical workers from all parts of the country to discuss, not only the book and problems of the history of philosophy, but also shortcomings and tasks on the philosophical front. Eighty-three contributions were made to the discussion at the conference, which was summarized in the brilliant speech by A. A. Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. Zhdanov's speech originally appeared in the first issue of the new Soviet journal, *QUESTIONS OF PHILOSOPHY*, and subsequently in the *BOLSHEVIK* of August 30, 1947, from which this translation has been made for *POLITICAL AFFAIRS*. — ED.]

COMRADES, THE DISCUSSION of the book by Comrade Alexandrov has not been confined to the subject under debate. It has transcended it in breadth and depth, posing also more general questions of the situation on the philosophical front. The discussion has been transformed into a kind of all-Union conference on the status of our scientific work in philosophy. This, of course, is quite natural and legitimate. The creation of a textbook on the history of philosophy, the first Marxian textbook in this sphere, represents a task of enormous scientific and political significance. It is therefore not accidental that the Central Committee has given so much attention to this question and has organized the present discussion.

To write a good textbook on the history of philosophy means to equip our intellectuals, our cadres, our youth with a new, powerful ideological weapon and at the same time to take a great step forward in the development of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Hence, the high level of the requirements for such a textbook was expressed in the discussion. The extension of the range of the discussion has, therefore, been profitable. Its results will, without doubt, be great, the more so since we dealt not only with questions connected with the evaluation of the textbook, but also with the more general problems of our philosophical work.

I shall permit myself to discuss both themes. It is far from my thought to summarize the discussion – this is the task of the author. I speak as a participant in the debate.

I ask in advance to be excused if I have recourse to citations, although Comrade Baskin has repeatedly warned all of us against this procedure. Of course, it is easy for him, an old salt on the sea of philosophy, to plow through philosophical seas and oceans without navigation instruments. But you will have to permit me, a novice, treading for the first time the unsteady, deck of the philosophical ship in a time of terrible storm, to use quotations as a sort of compass which will enable me to maintain the correct course.

I now pass to the remarks on the textbook.

I

THE WEAKNESSES OF COMRADE ALEXANDROV'S' BOOK

I believe that from a textbook on the history of philosophy we have a right to demand the fulfillment of the following conditions, which, in my opinion, are elementary.

First, it is necessary that the subject – the history of philosophy as a science – be precisely defined.

Second, the textbook should be scientific – *i.e.*, based on present-day achievements of dialectical and historical materialism.

Third, it is essential that the exposition of the history of philosophy be a creative and not a scholastic work; it should be directly linked with the tasks of the present, should lead to their elucidation, and should give the perspectives for the further development of philosophy.

Fourth, the facts adduced should be fully verified.

Fifth, the style should be clear, precise, and convincing.

I consider that this textbook does not meet these demands.

Let us begin with the subject of science.

Comrade Kivenko has pointed out that Comrade Alexandrov does not present a clear idea of the subject of science, and that although the book contains a large number of definitions having individual importance, in that they illuminate only individual aspects of the question, one does not find in the work an exhaustive general definition. That observation is entirely correct. Neither is the subject of the history of philosophy as a science defined. The definition given on page 14 is not complete. The definition on page 22, italicized, apparently as a basic definition, is essentially incorrect.

Should one agree with the author that "the history of philosophy is the history of progressive, ascending development of man's knowledge of the surrounding world," it would mean that the subject of the history of philosophy coincides with that of the history of science in general, and in which case philosophy itself would appear as the science of sciences. This conception was long ago rejected by Marxism,

MATERIALISM VERSUS IDEALISM

The author's assertion that the history of philosophy is also the history of the rise and development of many contemporary ideas is likewise incorrect because the concept "contemporary" is here identified with the concept "scientific," which, naturally, is erroneous. In defining the subject of the history of philosophy it is necessary to proceed from the definition of philosophical science, given by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.

This revolutionary side of Hegel's philosophy was adopted and developed by Marx. Dialectical materialism "no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences." Of former philosophy there remains "the science of thought and its laws – formal logic and dialectics." And dialectics, as understood by Marx, and in conformity with Hegel, includes what is now called the theory of knowledge, or epistemology, which, too, must regard its subject matter historically, studying and generalizing the origin and development of knowledge, the transition from non-knowledge to knowledge.¹

Consequently the scientific history of philosophy is the history of the origin, rise, and development of the scientific materialist world outlook and its laws. Inasmuch as materialism grew and developed in the struggle with idealist currents, the history of philosophy is simultaneously the history of the struggle of materialism with idealism.

As to the scientific character of the book from the standpoint of its utilizing contemporary attainments of dialectical and historical materialism, in this respect, too, it suffers from many serious inadequacies.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. XI, p. 17.

A REVOLUTION IN PHILOSOPHY

The author describes the history of philosophy and the development of philosophical ideas and systems as a smooth, evolutionary process through the accumulation of quantitative changes. The impression is created that Marxism arose simply as the successor to preceding progressive teachings – primarily the teachings of the French materialists, of English political economy, and the idealist school of Hegel.

On page 475 the author states that the philosophical theories formulated before Marx and Engels, although occasionally containing great discoveries, were not fully consistent and scientific in all their conclusions. Such a definition distinguishes Marxism from pre-Marxist philosophical systems only as a theory fully consistent and scientific in all its conclusions. Consequently, the difference between Marxism and pre-Marxist philosophical teachings consists only in that the latter were not fully consistent and scientific; the old philosophers merely "erred."

As you see, it is a question here only of quantitative changes. But that is metaphysics. The rise of Marxism was a genuine discovery, A revolution in philosophy. Like every discovery, like every leap, like every break in gradualness, like every transition into a new condition, the rise of Marxism could not have occurred without the previous accumulation of quantitative changes – in this instance, the development of philosophy prior to Marx and Engels. But the author evidently does not understand that Marx and Engels created a new philosophy, differing qualitatively from all antecedent philosophies, however progressive they were. The relation of Marxist philosophy to all preceding philosophies and the basic change which Marxism effected in philosophy, transforming it into a science, is well known to all. All the more strange, therefore, is the fact that the author focuses his attention, not on that which is new and revolutionary in Marxism but on that which unites it with the development of pre-Marxist philosophy. This, notwithstanding the statement of Marx and Engels that their discovery meant the end of the old philosophy.

MARXISM AND THE END OF THE OLD PHILOSOPHY

Evidently the author does not understand the concrete historical process of the development of philosophy.

One of the essential shortcomings of the book, if not the principal one, is its ignoring of the fact that in the course of history, not only do views on this or that philosophical question undergo change, but the very range of these questions, the very subject of philosophy, undergoes a constant change, which is in complete conformity with the dialectical nature of human cognition and should be clear to all real dialecticians.

On page 24 of his book, expounding on the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, Comrade Alexandrov writes: "Philosophy as an independent sphere of knowledge arose in the slave society of ancient Greece." And further, "Philosophy, arising in the sixth century [B.C.] as a special sphere of knowledge, attained wide dissemination."

But can we speak of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks as a special, differentiated sphere of knowledge? On no account. The philosophical views of the Greeks were so closely interwoven with their natural science and with their political views that we should not, and have no right to, transfer to Greek science our division of the sciences, the classification of the sciences which came later. Essentially, the Greeks knew only one, undifferentiated science, into which there entered also their philosophical conceptions. Whether we take Democritus, Epicurus, or Aristotle – all of them in equal degree confirm the thought of Engels that "the oldest Greek philosophers were at the same time investigators of nature."¹

The unique character of the development of philosophy resides in the fact that from it, as the scientific knowledge of nature and society developed, the positive sciences branched off one after another. Consequently, the domain of philosophy was continually reduced on account of the development of the positive sciences. (It should be noted that this process has not ended even up to the present time.) This emancipation of the natural and social sciences from the aegis of philosophy constitutes a progressive process, for the natural and social sciences, as well as for philosophy itself.

The creators of the philosophical systems of the past, who laid claim to the knowledge of absolute truth in the ultimate sense, were unable to further the development of the natural sciences, since aspiring to stand above science, they swaddled them with their schemes, imposing on living human understanding conclusions dictated, not by real life, but by the requirements of their philosophic

¹ Frederick Engels, *DIALECTICS OF Nature*, p. 245.

system. And so philosophy was transformed into a museum in which were piled the most diverse facts, conclusions, hypotheses, and outright fantasies. If philosophy was nonetheless able to serve as a means of surveying phenomena, of contemplation, it still was not suitable as an instrument for practical action on the world, as an instrument for understanding the world.

The last system of this kind was the system of Hegel, who attempted to erect a philosophical structure, subordinating all other sciences, pressing them into the Procrustean bed of its own categories. Hegel counted on solving all contradictions, but fell into a hopeless contradiction with the dialectical method which he himself had divined but not understood, and hence applied incorrectly.

But:

. . . As soon as we have once realized... that the task of philosophy thus stated means nothing but the task that a single philosopher should accomplish that which can only be accomplished by the entire human race, in its progressive development – as soon as we realize that, there is an end of all philosophy in the hitherto accepted sense of the word. One leaves alone "absolute truth," which is unattainable along this path or by any single individual; instead, one pursues attainable, relative truths along the path of the positive sciences, and the summation of their results by means of dialectical thinking.¹

The discovery of Marx and Engels represents the end of the old philosophy, *i.e.*, the end of that philosophy which claimed to give a universal explanation of the world.

Comrade Alexandrov's vague formulations blur the great revolutionary significance of the philosophical discovery of Marx and Engels, since he emphasizes that which connected Marx with the antecedent philosophers, but fails to show that with Marx there begins a completely new period in the history of philosophy – philosophy which for the first time has become science.

A SCIENTIFIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE PROLETARIAT

In close connection with this error, we find in Alexandrov's book a non-Marxist treatment of the history of philosophy as the

¹ Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 25.

gradual change from one philosophical school to another. With the appearance of Marxism as the scientific world outlook of the proletariat ends the old period in the history of philosophy, when philosophy was the occupation of isolated individuals, the possession of philosophical schools consisting of a small number of philosophers and their disciples, detached from life and the people, and alien to the people.

Marxism is not that kind of philosophical school. On the contrary, it supersedes the old philosophy – philosophy that was the property of a small elite, the aristocracy of the intellect. It marked the beginning of a completely new period in the history of philosophy, when it became the scientific weapon in the hands of the proletarian masses in their struggle for emancipation from capitalism.

Marxist philosophy, as distinguished from preceding philosophical systems, is not a science dominating the other sciences; rather, it is an instrument of scientific investigation, a method, penetrating all natural and social sciences, enriching itself with their attainments: in the course of their development. In this sense Marxist philosophy is the most complete and decisive negation of all preceding philosophy. But to negate, as Engels emphasized, does not mean merely to say "no." Negation includes continuity, signifies absorption, the critical reforming and unification in a new and higher synthesis of everything advanced and progressive that has been achieved in the history of human thought.

Hence, it follows that the history of philosophy, inasmuch as there exists the Marxist dialectical method, must include the history of the preparatory development of that method, showing that which conditioned its rise. Alexandrov's book does not give the history of logic and dialectics, does not show the development of the logical categories as the reflection of human practice; because of this the quotation from Lenin in the introduction to the book, to the effect that every category of dialectical logic should be considered a nodal point in the history of human thought, hangs in the air.

Entirely indefensible is the fact that the book brings the history of philosophy only up to the rise of Marxist philosophy, that is, to 1848. Without presenting the history of philosophy during the last hundred years, the work naturally cannot be considered a textbook. Why the author has so pitilessly wronged this period remains a mystery, and no explanation is to be found either in the preface or in the introduction.

Nor is the reason indicated for the failure to include the history of the development of Russian philosophy. It is not necessary to emphasize that this omission involves principle. Whatever the author's motives for excluding the history of Russian philosophy from a general history of philosophy, its omission objectively means belittlement of the role of Russian philosophy; it artificially divides the history of philosophy into the history of Western European and of Russian philosophy. The author makes no attempt to explain the necessity for such a division. This separation perpetuates the bourgeois division of "Western" and "Eastern" culture and presents Marxism as a regional Western current. On page 6 of the introduction, the author ardently argues the reverse position:

Without studying diligently and utilizing the profound criticism of the philosophical systems of the past given by the classics of Russian philosophy, it is impossible to achieve a scientific understanding of the development of philosophic thought in Western European countries.

Why then did the author fail to adhere to this correct position in his book? This remains absolutely incomprehensible and, taken together with the arbitrary termination at 1848, it produces a vexing impression.

The comrades who spoke in the discussion have also pointed out the gaps in the presentation of the history of the philosophy of the Orient.

It is clear that for this reason as I well the book requires radical revision.

THE PARTY CHARACTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Some comrades have indicated that the introduction to the book, which obviously should present the author's credo, correctly defines the tasks and methods of the investigation of the subject, but that the author somehow has not fulfilled his promises. I believe that this criticism is inadequate; for the introduction itself is faulty and cannot stand up against criticism.

I have already mentioned the inexact definition of the subject of the history of philosophy. But that is not all. The introduction contains other theoretical errors. Some comrades have pointed out the strained manner in which the author, dealing with the foundations of the Marxist-Leninist history of philosophy, refers to Chernishevsky,

Dobroliubov, and Lomonosov, who, of course, have no direct relation to the question under discussion. The question, however, involves more than this. The questions from the works of these great Russian scientists and philosophers were badly selected. The theoretical propositions which they contain are from the Marxist point of view incorrect and, I would add, even dangerous. And I do not in the slightest intend to cast any aspersion on the quoted authors, since the quotations were selected arbitrarily and are related to questions that have nothing in common with the subject with which the author is dealing. The point is that the author refers to Chernishevsky in order to show that the founders of different, although contradictory, philosophic systems must be tolerantly related one to another.

Allow me to cite the quotation from Chernishevsky:

The continuers of scientific work rise against their predecessors whose work served as the point of departure for their own labors. Thus, Aristotle took a hostile view of Plato, thus Socrates thoroughly humiliated the sophists, whose continuer he was. In modern times there are also many examples of this. But there are happy instances when founders of a new system understand clearly the connection of their judgments with the ideas of their predecessors and modestly consider themselves their disciples; when in disclosing the inadequacy in the ideas of their predecessors, they at the same time clearly manifest how much those ideas contributed to the development of their own. Such was the case, for instance, in the relation of Spinoza to Descartes. To the honor of the founders of modern science, it must be said that they look upon their predecessors with respect and almost filial affection, fully acknowledging the greatness of their genius and the noble character of their teaching, in which they indicate the germs of their own views. (Alexandrov: *HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY*, pp. 6-7.)

Inasmuch as the author offers this quotation without reservation, it obviously appears to be his own point of view. If that is so, the author actually takes the position of denying the principle of the Party-character of philosophy, inherent in Marxism-Leninism. It is well known with what passion and irreconcilability Marxism-Lenin-

ism has always conducted the sharpest struggle against all enemies of materialism. In this struggle Marxist-Leninists subject their opponents to ruthless criticism. An example of Bolshevik struggle against the opponents of materialism is Lenin's book, *MATERIALISM AND EMPIRIO-CRITICISM*, in which every word is like a piercing sword, annihilating the opponent. Lenin wrote:

The genius of Marx and Engels consisted in the very fact that in the course of a long period, *NEARLY HALF A CENTURY*, they developed materialism, that they further advanced one fundamental trend in philosophy, that they did not confine themselves to reiterating epistemological problems that had already been solved, but consistently applied – and showed *HOW* to apply – *THIS SAME* materialism in the sphere of the social sciences, mercilessly brushing aside as litter and rubbish the pretentious rigmarole, the innumerable attempts to "discover" a "new" line in philosophy, to invent a "new" trend and so forth....

And finally, take the various philosophical utterances by Marx in *CAPITAL* and other works, and you will find an *INVARIABLE* basic motif, *VIZ.*, insistence upon *MATERIALISM* and contemptuous derision of all obscurantism, of all confusion and all deviations towards *IDEALISM*. *ALL* Marx's philosophical utterances revolve within these fundamental opposites, and, in the eyes of professorial philosophy, their defect lies in this "narrowness" and "one-sidedness."¹

Lenin, we know, did not spare his opponents. In all attempts to blur and reconcile the contradictions between philosophical tendencies, Lenin always saw the maneuver of reactionary professorial philosophy. How then after that could Comrade Alexandrov appear in his book like a preacher of toothless vegetarianism in relation to philosophical opponents, presenting unqualified tribute to professorial quasi-objectivism, when Marxism arose, developed, and triumphed in a merciless struggle against all representatives of the idealist tendency?

Comrade Alexandrov does not confine himself to this. He constantly applies his objectivist ideas throughout the book. It is not accidental, therefore, that Comrade Alexandrov, before criticizing

¹ V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. XI, pp. 386-7.

some bourgeois philosopher, pays "tribute" to his merits and burns incense to him. Let us take, for example, the teaching of Fourier on the four phases in the development of mankind,

The great achievement of the social philosophy of Fourier, says Comrade Alexandrov,

...is his theory of the development of mankind. In its development society passes, according to Fourier, through four phases: 1) ascending disintegration; 2) ascending harmony; 3) descending harmony; 4) descending disintegration. In the last stage mankind experiences a period of senility, after which all life on earth comes to an end. Inasmuch as the development of society proceeds independently of human will, a higher stage of development arises just as unfailingly as the change of seasons. From this Fourier drew the conclusion of the inevitable transformation of the bourgeois system into a society in which free and collective labor would prevail. True, Fourier's theory of development of society was limited by the conception of the four phases, but for that period it represented a great step forward. (Alexandrov, *History of Western Philosophy*, pp. 353-354.)

There is not a trace of Marxist analysis in this. By comparison with what does the theory of Fourier represent a step forward? If its limitation consisted in that it spoke of four phases of the development of mankind, with the fourth phase constituting descending disintegration, as a result of which all life on earth comes to an end, then how shall we understand the author's criticism of Fourier that his theory of social development is limited within the confines of the four phases, when the fifth phase for mankind could consist only of life in the hereafter?

Comrade Alexandrov finds it possible to say something good about almost every philosopher of the past. The more eminent the bourgeois philosopher, the greater the flattery that is offered him. All of this shows that Comrade Alexandrov, perhaps without being aware of it, is himself a captive of bourgeois historians, who proceed from the assumption that every philosopher is first of all an associate in the profession, and only secondarily an opponent. Such conceptions, if they should take hold among us, inevitably would lead to objectivism, to subservience to bourgeois philosophers and

exaggeration of their services, toward depriving our philosophy of its militant offensive spirit. And that would signify the departure from the basic principle of materialism – its principle of direction, its partisanship. Well did Lenin teach us that "materialism includes, so to speak, partisanship, *i.e.*, the obligation when estimating any event to adopt directly and frankly the viewpoint of a definite social group."¹

The exposition of philosophical views in Alexandrov's book is abstract, objectivist, neutral. Philosophical schools are placed one after another or one near the other in the book, but are not shown in struggle against one another. That, too, is a "tribute" to the academic professorial "tendency." In this connection, it is apparently not accidental that the author's exposition of the principle of partisanship in philosophy is not satisfactory. The author refers to the philosophy of Hegel as an example of partisanship in philosophy; and the struggle of antagonistic philosophies has for him its illustration in the struggle of the reactionary and progressive principles within Hegel himself. Such a method of demonstration is not only objectivist eclecticism, but it clearly embellishes Hegel, inasmuch as in this way one wants to show that in Hegel's philosophy there is as much progressive as there is reactionary content.

To conclude on this point, I may add that Comrade Alexandrov's method of evaluating various philosophical systems – "along with merits, there are also shortcomings," or "the following theory is also of importance" – is marked by extreme vagueness, is metaphysical, and can only confuse. It is incomprehensible why Comrade Alexandrov chose to pay tribute to the academic scientific traditions of the old bourgeois schools, forgetting the fundamental principle of materialism which demands irreconcilability in the struggle against one's opponents.

A further remark. A critical study of philosophical systems must have an orientation. Philosophical views and ideas long slain and buried should not attract much attention. On the other hand, philosophical systems and ideas still current, which, notwithstanding their reactionary character, are being utilized today by the enemies of Marxism, demand especially sharp criticism. This includes particularly neo-Kantianism, theology, old and new editions of agnosticism, the attempts to smuggle God into modern natural science, and

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 276 (Russian).

every other cookery that has for its aim the freshening up of stale idealist merchandise for the market., That is the arsenal which the philosopher lackeys of imperialism make use of at the present time in order to bolster their frightened masters.

ON THE METHOD OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

The introduction to the book also contains an incorrect treatment of the notions of reactionary and progressive ideas and philosophical systems. The author states that the question of the reactionary or progressive character of one or another idea or philosophical system should be determined on the basis of historical conditions. But, time and again he ignores the established position of Marxism that the very same idea can be reactionary or progressive under different concrete historical conditions. The author, by obscuring this point, opens a fissure for the smuggling in of the idealist conception of ideas as independent of history.

While the author correctly notes that the development of philosophical thought in the final analysis is determined by the material conditions of social life and that the development of philosophical thought has only relative independence, he repeatedly violates the basic position of scientific materialism. Time and again he presents the various philosophical systems without relating them to their actual historical environment, and without showing the social-class roots of this or that philosopher. That is the case, for instance, with his exposition of the philosophical views of Socrates, Democritus, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Feuerbach, and others. Such a method is, clearly, not scientific; it justifies the assumption that the author has slipped into the course of treating the development of philosophical ideas as independent of history, a distinguishing characteristic of idealist philosophy.

The failure to show the organic connection of this or that philosophical system with its historical environment is evident even where the author attempts to give an analysis of that environment. What we have in those instances is a purely mechanical, formal, and not a living organic connection. The divisions and chapters dealing with the philosophical views of a particular epoch, and those discussing the historical circumstances, revolve upon parallel planes, while the presentation of the historical data – the link of causation between the basis and the superstructure – is given as a rule unscientifically, slipshod-wise. It does not provide material for analysis

but rather presents an inadequate frame of reference. Such, for example, is the introduction to Chapter VI, entitled "Eighteenth Century France," which is utterly irrelevant and which in no way elucidates the sources of the ideas of French philosophy in the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Consequently, the ideas of the French philosophers lose their connection with the epoch and begin to appear as some independent phenomenal. Allow me to quote this part:

Beginning with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, France following behind England gradually takes the road to bourgeois development, experiencing radical changes for a hundred years in its economy, politics, and ideology. The country, although it was still backward, began to free itself from its feudal inertia. Like many other European states of that time, France entered the period of primary capitalist accumulation.

The new bourgeois social structure was rapidly taking shape in all spheres of social life, quickly giving rise to a new ideology, a new culture. About that time we witness in France the beginning of a rapid growth of such cities as Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, and Havre, and of the development of a strong merchant fleet. International trading companies arose one after another, and military expeditions were organized which conquered a number of colonies. Trade grew rapidly. In the years 1784-1788 the turnover of external trade reached 1,011,600 livres, exceeding more than four times the trade of 1716-1720. The growth of trade was facilitated by the Treaty of Aachen [Aix-la-Chapelle] (1748) and the Treaty of Paris (1763). Especially significant was the trade in books. Thus, for instance, in 1774 the turnover in the book trade in France reached 45 million francs, while in England it stood only at 12-13 million francs. In the hands of France was found nearly half the gold supply of Europe. At the same time France still remained an agrarian country. The overwhelming majority of the population was agrarian. (Alexandrov, pp. 315-316.)

That, of course, is no analysis: it is merely an enumeration of a number of facts set forth without relation to one another, but simply in juxtaposition. It is obvious that from these data as "basis" one

cannot derive any characteristic of French philosophy, the development of which appears detached from the historical conditions of the France of that period.

Let us take as a further example the description of the rise of German idealist philosophy. Alexandrov writes:

Germany in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century was a backward country with a reactionary political regime. Feudal-serf and artisan-guild relations prevailed in it. At the end of the eighteenth century the urban population was less than 25 per cent of the total, while the artisans constituted only 4 per cent. Corvée, quit-rent, serfdom, and guild restrictions hindered the development of the embryonic capitalist relations. Moreover, the country was split up into numerous political segments.

Comrade Alexandrov cites the percentage of urban population in Germany to illustrate the backwardness of that country and the reactionary character of its state and social-political structure. But in that same period the urban population of France was less than 10 per cent of the whole; nevertheless, France was not a backward feudal land, as was Germany, but the center of the bourgeois revolutionary movement in Europe. Consequently, the percentage of urban population itself does not explain anything. More than that, the fact itself must be explained by the concrete historical conditions. This, too, is an example of the inept use of historical material to explain the rise and development of one or another form of ideology.

Alexandrov writes further:

The most prominent ideologists of the German bourgeoisie of that period – Kant, and later Fichte and Hegel – expressed through their idealist philosophies, in an abstract form, conditioned by the narrowness of German reality, the ideology of the German bourgeoisie of that epoch.

Let us compare this cold, indifferent, objectivist statement of facts, from which it is impossible to understand the causes for the rise of German idealism, with the Marxist analysis of the conditions of that time in Germany, presented in a living, militant style, which stirs and convinces the reader. Here is how Engels characterizes the situation in Germany:

...It was all over one living mass of putrefaction and repulsive decay. Nobody felt himself at ease. The trade, commerce, industry and agriculture of the country were reduced to almost nothing; peasantry, tradesmen and manufacturers felt the double pressure of a blood-sucking government and bad trade; the nobility and princes found that their incomes, in spite of the squeezing of their inferiors, could not be made to keep pace with their increasing expenditures; everything was wrong, and a general uneasiness prevailed throughout the country. No education, no means of operating upon the minds of the masses, no free press, no public spirit, not even an extended commerce with other countries – nothing but meanness and selfishness – a mean, sneaking, miserable shopkeeping spirit pervading the whole people. Everything worn out, crumbling down, going fast to ruin, and not even the slightest hope of a beneficial change, not even so much strength in the nation as might have sufficed for carrying away the putrid corpses of dead institutions.¹

Compare this clear, sharp, exact, profoundly scientific characterization given by Engels with that which Alexandrov gives and you will see how badly Comrade Alexandrov utilizes the material at hand in the inexhaustible wealth left us by the founders of Marxism. The author has failed to apply the materialist method to the exposition of the history of philosophy. This deprives the book of scientific character, making of it, to a considerable extent, an account of the biographies of the philosophers and their philosophic systems, unrelated to the historical conditions. This violates the principle of historical materialism:

All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society, must be individually examined before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-legal, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc., notions corresponding to them.²

¹ Frederick Engels, "The State of Germany," *The Northern Star*, October 25, 1845; "Marx-Engels, *Gesamtaugabe*, Erste Abteilung, Band IV, p. 482.

² Engels to Conrad Schmidt, August 5, 1890, *Marx-Engels, Selected Correspondence*, p. 473.

The author, further, sets forth unclearly and inadequately the purposes of the study of the history of philosophy. Nowhere does he emphasize that one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy and its history is to continue the development of philosophy as a science, to deduce new laws, to verify its propositions in practice, to replace old theses with new ones. The author proceeds chiefly from the pedagogical aspects of the history of philosophy, from the cultural-educational task. And so he gives to the whole study of the history of philosophy a passive, contemplative, academic character. That, of course, does not correspond to the Marxist-Leninist definition of philosophical science, which, like every science, must continuously be developed, perfected, enriched by new propositions, while it discards the obsolete.

The author concentrates on the pedagogical aspects, thus placing limitations on the development of the science, as though Marxism-Leninism had already reached its apex and as though the task of developing our theory were no longer a main task. Such reasoning is inconsistent with the spirit of Marxism-Leninism inasmuch as it introduces the metaphysical idea of Marxism as a completed and perfected theory; it can lead only to the drying up of living and inquiring philosophical thought.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES

Likewise unsatisfactory is the author's treatment of the development of the natural sciences in that period when the history of philosophy could not be separated from the progress of the natural sciences. Thus, Comrade Alexandrov fails to clarify the conditions for the rise and development of scientific materialism on the granite foundation of the achievements of modern natural science.

In expounding the history of philosophy, Alexandrov managed to sever it from the history of the natural sciences. It is characteristic that the introduction, which sets forth the main premises of the book, fails to mention the interrelation of philosophy and the natural sciences. The author does not refer to the natural sciences even when such silence would seem impossible. Thus, on page 9, he writes: "Lenin in his works, particularly in *MATERIALISM AND EMPIRIO-CRITICISM*, studied the Marxist theory of society in all its aspects and further developed it." In speaking of *MATERIALISM AND EMPIRIO-CRITICISM*, Comrade Alexandrov managed to say nothing

about the problems of natural science and its connection with philosophy.

One is struck by the extremely poor and abstract characterization of the level of natural science at various periods. Thus, with regard to the natural science of the ancient Greeks, we read that there took place "the nascence of the sciences of nature" (p. 26). With regard to the epoch of the later scholasticism (XII-XIII centuries) we read that "there appeared many inventions and technical improvements" (p. 120).

Where the author attempts to clarify such vague formulations, we get only an inadequately connected enumeration of the discoveries. Moreover, the book contains flagrant errors, disclosing an amazing ignorance of the questions of natural science. Of what value, for instance, is the description of the development of science in the epoch of the Renaissance:

The learned Goerika constructed his famous pneumatic pump, and the existence of atmospheric pressure which replaced the notion of vacuum, was demonstrated practically, at first through the experiment with hemispheres at Magdeburg. In the course of centuries people argued about the location of the "center of the world;" and whether our planet was to be considered that center. But then Copernicus made his entrance into science, and later Galileo. The latter proved the existence of spots on the sun and their change of position. He saw in this, and other discoveries, confirmation of the teaching of Copernicus on the heliocentric structure of our solar system. The barometer taught people to forecast the weather. The microscope replaced the system of conjectures regarding the life of the minutest organisms and played a large part in the development of biology. The compass helped Columbus to prove by experience the spherical structure of our planet. (p. 135.)

Nearly every one of these sentences is absurd. How could atmospheric pressure replace the notion of vacuum? Does the existence of atmosphere negate the existence of vacuum? In what way did the movement of the sun spots confirm the teaching of Copernicus?

The idea that the barometer forecasts weather is in the same unscientific vein. Unfortunately, even today people have not yet fully learned how to forecast the weather, as is well known to all of you

from the practices of our own Weather Bureau. Further, can the microscope replace the system of conjecture? And, finally, what is this "spherical structure of our planet"? Until now it has seemed that *SPHERICAL* could refer only to shape.

Alexandrov's book is full of such pearls.

But the author is guilty of even more essential errors, touching on principle. He states (page 357) that the way was prepared for the dialectical method by the advances of natural science "as early as the second half of the eighteenth century." This basically contradicts Engels' well-known statement that THE DIALECTICAL method was prepared for by the discovery of the cellular structure of organisms, by the theory of the conservation and transformation of energy, by the theory of Darwin. All these discoveries date from the nineteenth century. On this false assumption, the author proceeds to enumerate the discoveries of the eighteenth century and speaks extensively of Galvani, Laplace, and Lyell, but as regards the three great discoveries indicated by Engels he limits himself to the following:

Thus, for instance, already during the life of Feuerbach, there WAS established the cellular theory, the theory of the transformation of energy, and there appeared the theory of Darwin on the origin of the species through natural selection. (p. 427.)

Such are the basic weaknesses of the book. I shall not digress upon incidental and secondary weaknesses; neither will I repeat the highly valuable remarks of criticism, from the theoretical and the practical standpoint, which have been made during the discussion.

The conclusion is that the textbook is bad, that it must be basically revised. But such revision means first of all overcoming the false and confused conceptions which are manifestly current among our philosophers, including leading ones. I now pass to the second question, the question of the situation on our philosophical front.

II

THE SITUATION ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRONT

The fact, that Comrade Alexandrov's book received recognition by the majority of our leading philosophical workers, that it was presented for the Stalin prize, that it was recommended as a textbook and received many laudatory reviews, shows that other philosophical workers obviously share

the mistakes of Comrade Alexandrov. This bespeaks a most unsatisfactory situation on our theoretical front.

The fact that the book did not evoke any considerable protest, that it required the intervention of the Central Committee, and particularly Comrade Stalin, to expose its inadequacies, shows the absence of developed Bolshevik criticism and self-criticism on the philosophical front. The lack of creative discussions, of criticism and self-criticism, could not but have a harmful effect upon our scientific work in philosophy. It is known that philosophical works are entirely insufficient in quantity and weak in quality. Monographs and articles on philosophy are a rare occurrence.

Many have spoken here of the need for a philosophical journal. The need for such a journal is questionable. We have not yet forgotten the sad experience with the periodical *Under the Banner of Marxism*. It seems to me that the present possibilities for publishing original monographs and articles are not utilized adequately.

Comrade Svetlov stated here that the reading public of *The Bolshevik* is not the public for theoretical works of a special character. I think that this is entirely incorrect and proceeds from an obvious underestimation of the high level of our readers and their demands. Such an opinion, it seems to me, comes from a failure to understand that our philosophy is not the property merely of a group of professional philosophers, but belongs to our entire Soviet intelligentsia. There was decidedly nothing bad in the tradition of the advanced Russian magazines of the pre-revolutionary epoch, which published along with articles on literature and art, scientific works, including philosophical studies. Our magazine *The Bolshevik* speaks to a far larger audience than any philosophical journal, and to enclose the creative work of our philosophers in a specialized philosophical journal, it seems to me, would create the danger of narrowing the basis of our philosophical work. Please do not take me for an opponent of a journal. It seems to me that the paucity of philosophical studies in our magazines and in *The Bolshevik* invites us to begin to overcome this weakness in their pages first, especially in the magazines which from time to time even now publish philosophical articles having a scientific and social interest.

Our leading philosophical institute – the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences – in my opinion, presents a rather unsatisfactory picture, too. It does not gather to itself the workers in the periphery, and, having no connection with them, is therefore not in reality an institution of an all-Union character. Philosophers in the provinces are left on their own, although they represent a great force which unfortunately is not utilized. Philosophical studies, including works submitted for university degrees, turn for their

themes toward the past, toward quiet and less responsible historical subjects of the type of: "The Copernican Heresy – Past and Present." This leads toward a certain revival of scholasticism. From this point of view the dispute about Hegel which took place here appears strange. The participants in that dispute forced an open door. The question of Hegel was settled long ago. There is no reason whatsoever to pose it anew. No material was presented here beyond that which had already been analyzed and evaluated. The discussion itself was irritating in its scholasticism and as unproductive as the probing at one time in certain circles as whether one should cross oneself with two or three fingers, or whether God can create a stone which he cannot lift, or whether the mother of God was a virgin. Problems of present-day actuality are hardly dealt with at all. All this taken together is pregnant with great dangers, much greater than you imagine. The gravest danger is the fact that some of you have already fallen into the habit of accepting these weaknesses.

ADVANCING OUR PHILOSOPHICAL FRONT

Our philosophical work does not manifest either a militant spirit or a Bolshevik tempo. Considered in that light, some of the erroneous theses of Alexandrov's textbook reflect the lag on the entire philosophical front, thus constituting, not an isolated accidental factor, but a phenomenon that is general. We have often used in our discussion the term "philosophical front." But where, in actuality, is this front? When we speak of the philosophical front, it immediately suggests an organized detachment of militant philosophers, perfectly equipped with Marxist theory, waging a determined offensive against hostile ideology abroad and against the survivals of bourgeois ideology in the consciousness of Soviet people within our country – a detachment ceaselessly advancing our science, arming the toilers of our Socialist society with the consciousness of the correctness of our path, and with confidence, scientifically grounded, in the ultimate victory of our cause.

But does our philosophical front resemble a real front? It resembles rather a stagnant creek, or a bivouac at some distance from the battlefield. The field has not yet been conquered, for the most part contact has not been established with the enemy, there is no reconnaissance, the weapons are rusting, the soldiers are fighting at their own risk and peril; while the commanders are either intoxicated with past victories, or are debating whether they have sufficient forces for an offensive or should ask for aid from the outside, or are discussing to what extent consciousness can lag behind without appearing to lag too far.

This, at a time when our Party urgently needs an upswing of philosophical work. The rapid changes which every new day brings into our Socialist life are not generalized by our philosophers, not illuminated, from the viewpoint of Marxist dialectics. This only renders more difficult the conditions for the further development of philosophical science. As a result, the development of philosophical thought proceeds to a considerable extent apart from our professional philosophers. This is entirely inadmissible.

Obviously, the cause for the lag in the philosophical front is not connected with any objective conditions. The objective conditions are more favorable than ever. The material awaiting scientific analysis and generalization is unlimited. The causes for the lag on the philosophical front must be sought in the subjective sphere. These causes are basically the same as those disclosed by the Central Committee in analyzing the lag in other sectors of the ideological front.

As you will remember, the decisions of the Central Committee on ideological problems were directed against formalist and apolitical attitudes in literature and art, against the ignoring of present-day themes and withdrawal into the past, against bowing before foreign influences and for the militant Bolshevik-Party character of literature and art. It is known that many groups of workers on our ideological front have already drawn proper conclusions from the decisions of the Central Committee and have made considerable advance on this path.

But our philosophers have lagged behind. Apparently they have not taken note of the absence of principle and idea-content in philosophical work, of the neglect of present-day themes, the existence of servility and fawning before bourgeois philosophy. Apparently they believe that a turn on the ideological front does not concern them. It is clear now that the turn is necessary.

A considerable share of responsibility for the fact that the philosophical front does not stand in the first ranks of our ideological work rests unfortunately upon Comrade Alexandrov. Regrettably, he does not possess the ability for sharply critical disclosure of the weaknesses of his work. He evidently overestimates his powers and does not rely on the experience and knowledge of the collective body of philosophers. Moreover, he relies too much in his work on a narrow circle of intimate collaborators and admirers. Philosophical activity has somehow been monopolized by a small group of

philosophers, while a larger number, especially in the provinces, have not been brought into leading work.

This cannot be considered a proper relationship among philosophers.

It is clear that the creation of such a work as a textbook on the history of philosophy is beyond the capacity of one man and that Comrade Alexandrov from the very beginning should have drawn upon a wide circle of authors – dialectical materialists, historical materialists, historians, natural scientists, and economists. In thus failing to rely upon a large group of competent people, Comrade Alexandrov chose an incorrect method of preparing his book. This fault must be corrected. Philosophical knowledge, naturally, is the property of the collective of Soviet philosophers. The method of drawing in a large number of authors is now being applied to the editing of the textbook on political economy which should be ready in the near future. Into this work there have been drawn wide circles, not only of economists, but also of historians and philosophers. Such a method of creative work is the most reliable. This implies also another idea – that of uniting the efforts of ideological workers in various fields, who at present have insufficient contact with each other, for the solution of large problems of general scientific significance. Thus we secure reciprocal activity among the workers in various branches of ideology, and are assured that we will advance, not helter-skelter, but in an organized and unified manner, and consequently, with the greatest guarantee of success.

CRITICISM AND SELF-CRITICISM – THE SPECIAL FORM OF STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW

What are the roots of the subjective errors of a number of leading workers on the philosophical front? Why did the representatives of the older generation of philosophers in the course of the discussion justly reproach some of the young philosophers for their premature senility, for their lack of militant tone, of combativeness? Obviously, there can be only one answer to this question – insufficient knowledge of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism – and the presence of remnants of the influence of bourgeois ideology. This expresses itself also in the fact that many of our workers still do not understand that Marxism-Leninism is a living, creative theory, continuously developing, continuously enriching itself on the basis of the experience of SOCIALIST construction and the achieve-

ments of contemporary natural science. Such underestimation of this living revolutionary aspect of our theory cannot but lead to the abasement of philosophy and its role.

Precisely in this lack of militancy and fighting spirit must we look for the reasons that some of our philosophers fear to apply themselves to new problems – to present-day questions, to the solution of problems which are daily posed by practice, and for which philosophy is obligated to provide an answer. It is time to advance more courageously the theory of Soviet society, of the Soviet state, of contemporary natural science, of ethics and aesthetics. It is necessary to put an end to a cowardice alien to Bolshevism. To permit a standstill in the development of theory means to dry up our philosophy, to deprive it of its most valuable feature – its capacity for development, and to transform it into a dead, barren dogma.

The question of Bolshevik criticism and self-criticism is for our philosophers not only a practical but a profoundly theoretical matter.

Since, as dialectics teaches us, the inner content of the process of development is the struggle of opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between the dying and the rising, between the decaying and the developing, our Soviet philosophy must show how that law of dialectics operates in Socialist society and what are the specific characteristics of its operation. We know that in a society divided into classes that law operates differently than in our Soviet society. Here there is a broad field for scientific investigation, and none of our philosophers has cultivated that field. This, notwithstanding the fact that our Party long-ago discovered and placed at the service of Socialism that particular form of revealing and overcoming the contradictions of Socialist-society (such contradictions exist and philosophy cannot avoid dealing with them) – that particular form of struggle between the old and the new, between the dying and the rising, in our Soviet society, which is known as criticism and self-criticism.

In our Soviet society, where antagonistic classes have been liquidated, the struggle between the old and the new, and consequently the development from the lower to the higher, proceeds not in the form of struggle between antagonistic classes and of cataclysms, as is the case under capitalism, but in the form of criticism and self-criticism, which is the real motive force of our development, a powerful instrument in the hands of the Party. This is, incontestably, a

new aspect of movement, a new type of development, a new dialectical law.

Marx stated that earlier philosophers only explained the world, while the task today is to change the world. We have changed the old-world and built a new one, but our philosophers, unfortunately, do not adequately explain this new world, nor do they adequately participate in transforming it. In the discussion there were several attempts, as it were, "theoretically" to explain the causes of that lag. It was stated, for instance, that the philosophers worked too long as commentators, and for this reason did not pass in due time to original monographs. This explanation may be well-sounding, but it is not convincing. Of course, the philosophers must now place creative work in the forefront, but that does not mean that the work of commentary, or rather of popularization, should be given up. Our people need this equally as much.

THE DEPRAVED IDEOLOGY OF THE BOURGEOISIE

We must now quickly make up for lost time. The problems do not wait. The brilliant victory of Socialism achieved in the Great Patriotic War, which was at the same time a brilliant victory for Marxism, is like a bone in the throat of the imperialists. Today the center of the struggle against Marxism has shifted to America and England. All the forces of obscurantism and reaction have today been placed at the service of the struggle against Marxism. Brought out anew and placed at the service of bourgeois philosophy are the instruments of atom-dollar democracy, the outworn armor of obscurantism and clericalism: the Vatican and the racist theory, rabid nationalism and decayed idealist philosophy, the mercenary yellow press and depraved bourgeois art. But apparently all these do not suffice. Today under the banner of "ideological" struggle against Marxism large reserves are being mobilized. Gangsters, pimps, spies, and criminal elements are recruited. Let me take at random a recent example. As was reported a few days ago in *IZVESTIA*, the journal *LES TEMPS MODERNES*, edited by the existentialist Sartre, lauds as some new revelation a book by the writer Jean Genet *THE DIARY OF A THIEF*, which opens with the words: "Treason, theft, and homosexuality – these will be my key topics. There exists an organic connection between my taste for treason, the occupation of the thief, and my amorous adventures." The author manifestly knows his business. The plays of this Jean Genet are presented with

much glitter on the Parisian stage and Jean Genet himself is showered with invitations to visit America. Such is the "last word" of bourgeois philosophy.

We know from the experience of our victory over fascism into what a blind alley the idealist philosophy has led whole nations. Now it appears in its new, repulsively ugly character which reflects the whole depth, baseness, and loathsomeness of the decay of the bourgeoisie. Pimps and depraved criminals as philosophers – this is indeed the limit of decay and ruin. Nevertheless, these forces still have life, are still capable of poisoning the mass consciousness.

Contemporary bourgeois science supplies clericalism, supplies fideism, with new arguments which must be mercilessly exposed. We can take as an example the English astronomer Eddington's theory of the physical constants of the world, which leads directly to the Pythagorean mysticism of numbers and, from mathematical formulae, deduces such "essential constants" of the world as the apocalyptic number 666, etc. Many followers of Einstein, in their failure to understand the dialectical process of knowledge, the relationship of absolute and relative truth, transpose the results of the study of the laws of motion of the finite, limited sphere of the universe to the whole infinite universe and arrive at the idea of the finite nature of the world, its limitedness in time and space. The astronomer Milne has even "calculated" that the world was created two billion years ago. It would probably be correct to apply to these English scientists the words of their great countryman, the philosopher Bacon, about those who turn the impotence of their science into a libel against nature.

In like measure, the Kantian subterfuges of latter-day bourgeois atomic physicists lead them to deductions of the "free will" of the electron, and to attempts to represent matter as only some combination of waves and other such nonsense. Here is a colossal field of activity for our philosophers, who should analyze and generalize the results of contemporary natural science, remembering the advice of Engels that materialism "With each epoch-making discovery even in the sphere of natural science... has to change its form."¹

Upon whom, if not upon us – the land of victorious Marxism and its philosophers – devolves the task of heading the struggle against

¹ Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 36.

corrupt and base bourgeois ideology? Who if not we should strike blows against it?

THE TRIUMPH OF MARXISM

From the ashes of the war have arisen the new democracies and the national liberation movement of the colonial peoples. Socialism is on the order of the day in the life of the peoples. Who if not we – the land of victorious Socialism and its philosophers – should help our friends and brothers beyond our borders to illuminate their struggle for a new society with the light of scientific Socialist understanding? Who if not we should enlighten them and arm them with the ideological weapon of Marxism?

In our country we have the vast expansion of Socialist economy and culture. The steadfast growth of the Socialist understanding of the masses presents ever greater demands upon our ideological work. What is taking place is a broad assault upon the vestiges of capitalism in the consciousness of people. Who but our philosophers should head the ranks of the workers on the ideological front, applying in full measure the Marxian theory of knowledge in generalizing the vast experience of Socialist construction and in solving the new tasks of Socialism!

In the face of these great tasks one might ask; Are our philosophers capable of undertaking these new obligations? Is there enough powder in our philosophical powder-horns? Has not our philosophical power weakened? Are our scientific philosophical cadres capable, with their own inner strength, of overcoming the defects of their development and reconstructing their work anew? There can be but one answer to this question. The philosophical discussion has shown that we have these forces, that they are by no means small, that they are capable of exposing their errors in order to overcome them. We need only more confidence in our forces, more testing of our forces in active battles, in posing and solving the burning present-day problems. It is time to put an end to the non-militant tempo of our work, to shake off the old Adam and to begin to work as Marx, Engels, Lenin worked, as Stalin works.

Comrades, as you may remember, Engels, in his time, greeted the appearance of a Marxian pamphlet in 2,000 or 3,000 copies and characterized this as a great political event of vast significance. From such a fact, insignificant by our standards, Engels drew the conclusion that Marxist philosophy had deeply taken root in the

working class. What are we to say of the penetration of Marxian philosophy into broad layers of our people; what would Marx and Engels HAVE said if they knew that in our country philosophical works are distributed among the people in tens of millions of copies? This is a real triumph of Marxism, and it is a living testimony of the fact that the great teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin have become in our land the teaching of the entire people.

On this foundation, which has no equal in the world, our philosophy should flourish. May you be worthy of our epoch, the epoch of Lenin and Stalin, the epoch of our people, our victorious people!