

Letter to Comrade Shatunovsky

August 1930

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Comrade Shatunovsky,

I do not remember your first letter (about Liebknecht).

Your second (on criticism) I have read. Criticism, of course, is necessary and obligatory, but on one condition: that it is not barren. Unfortunately, your criticism cannot be considered other than barren.

Let me take it up point by point:

1) It is not true that before the revolution land was bought only by kulaks. In point of fact both the kulaks and the middle peasants used to buy land. If the peasant households that bought land are divided according to social groups, a larger number of them will be found to belong to middle peasants than to kulaks; but if the quantity of land bought is taken as the criterion the kulaks will preponderate. In my speech, ¹ of course, I had the middle peasants in mind.

2) The phrase about the blockheads' retreat to Leninist positions is another way of expressing the idea that they are renouncing their errors. That, I believe, is clear and understandable. Your "critical" remark on this score is really amusing.

3) You are likewise wrong about the conversion of rye into pig food. The point I am making is not that rye can also be fed to pigs, but that there is a crisis of over-production of rye, ² which makes it unprofitable to enlarge the area under rye and compels the capitalists (for the sake of maintaining prices) to spoil rye by a special chemical treatment that makes it fit only for pig food (and unfit for human consumption). How could you overlook this "trifle"?

4) You are still more wrong in assuming that the decay of capitalism precludes its growth. Read Lenin's Imperialism ³ and you will realise that the decay of capitalism in certain industries and countries does not preclude but presupposes the growth of capitalism in other industries and countries. How could you fail to notice this "trifle" in Lenin? Criticise, if you please, but do so from Lenin's point of view, and from that point of view alone, if you want your criticism to be productive.

5) You are likewise wrong when you describe our country as one of the "colonial type." Colonial countries are in the main pre-capitalist countries. Ours, however, is a post-capitalist country. The former have not reached the stage of developed capitalism. The latter has outgrown developed capitalism. They are two fundamentally different types. How can one forget this "trifle," comrade critic?

6) You are surprised that in Stalin's view the new economic cadres should be technically more experienced than the old. ⁴ It may be asked, why is this? Is it not true that in our country our old economic cadres were trained during the restoration period, the period when the old and technically backward factories were working to capacity, and consequently they did not afford much technical experience? Is it not true that in the period of reconstruction, when new, modern technical equipment is being introduced, the old economic cadres have to be retrained in the new methods, not infrequently giving way to new, more qualified technical cadres?

Will you really deny that the old economic cadres, who were trained in working the old factories to capacity or restarting them, frequently prove to be quite unable to cope not only with the new machinery but also with our new tempos?

7) I shall not touch upon the other points raised in your letter, which are smaller and more trivial, although just as fallacious.

8) You speak of your "devotion" to me. Perhaps it was just a chance phrase. Perhaps. . . . But if the phrase was not accidental I would advise you to discard the "principle" of devotion to persons. It is not the Bolshevik way. Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals.

With communist greetings,

J. Stalin

August 1930

Notes

¹J. V. Stalin, *Concerning Questions of Agrarian Policy in the U.S.S.R. Speech delivered at a Conference of Marxist Students of Agrarian Questions*, December 27, 1929 (see *Works*, Vol. 12, pp. 147-178).

²J. V. Stalin, *Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)* (see *Works*, Vol. 12, pp. 248-49).

³V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 22, pp. 173-290).

⁴J. V. Stalin, *Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)* (see *Works*, Vol. 12, p. 310).

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