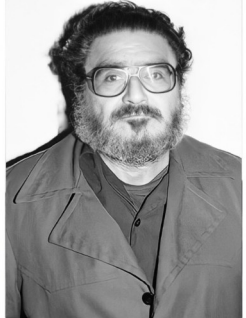
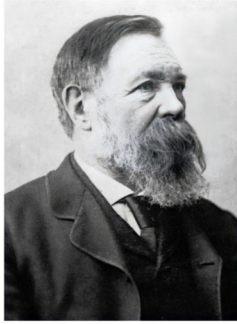


**MARXISM**  
**VERSUS**  
**LIBERALISM**  
and other interviews

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# Marxism Versus Liberalism<sup>1</sup>

**H.G. WELLS:** I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Stalin, for agreeing to see me. I was in the United States recently. I had a long conversation with President Roosevelt and tried to ascertain what his leading ideas were. Now I have come to ask you what you are doing to change the world.

**J.V. STALIN:** Not so very much.

**H.G. WELLS:** I wander around the world as a common man and, as a common man, observe what is going on around me.

**J.V. STALIN:** Important public men like yourself are not “common men”. Of course, history alone can show how important this or that public man has been; at all events, you do not look at the world as a “common man.”

**H.G. WELLS:** I am not pretending humility. What I mean is that I try to see the world through the eyes of the common man, and not as a party politician or a responsible administrator. My visit to the United States excited my mind. The old financial world is collapsing; the economic life of the country is being reorganized on new lines. Lenin said: “We must learn to do business, learn this from the capitalists.” Today the capitalists have to learn from you, to grasp the spirit of socialism. It seems to me that what is taking place in the United States is a profound reorganization, the creation of planned, that is, socialist, economy. You and Roosevelt begin from two different starting points. But is there not a relation in ideas, a kinship of ideas, between Moscow and Washington? In Washington I was struck by the

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1 July 23, 1934.

same thing I see going on here; they are building offices, they are creating a number of state regulation bodies, they are organizing a long-needed Civil Service. Their need, like yours, is directive ability.

**J.V. STALIN:** The United States is pursuing a different aim from that which we are pursuing in the U.S.S.R.

The aim which the Americans are pursuing, arose out of the economic troubles, out of the economic crisis. The Americans want to rid themselves of the crisis on the basis of private capitalist activity, without changing the economic basis. They are trying to reduce to a minimum the ruin, the losses caused by the existing economic system. Here, however, as you know, in place of the old, destroyed economic basis, an entirely different, a new economic basis has been created. Even if the Americans you mention partly achieve their aim, i.e., reduce these losses to a minimum, they will not destroy the roots of the anarchy which is inherent in the existing capitalist system. They are preserving the economic system which must inevitably lead, and cannot but lead, to anarchy in production. Thus, at best, it will be a matter, not of the reorganization of society, not of abolishing the old social system which gives rise to anarchy and crises, but of restricting certain of its excesses. Subjectively, perhaps, these Americans think they are reorganizing society; objectively, however, they are preserving the present basis of society.

That is why, objectively, there will be no reorganization of society.

Nor will there be planned economy. What is planned economy? What are some of its attributes? Planned economy tries to abolish unemployment. Let us suppose it is possible, while preserving the capitalist system, to reduce unemployment to a certain minimum.

But surely, no capitalist would ever agree to the complete abolition of unemployment, to the abolition of the reserve army of unemployed, the purpose of which is

to bring pressure on the labor market, to ensure a supply of cheap labor. Here you have one of the holes in the “planned economy” of bourgeois society. Furthermore, planned economy presupposes increased output in those branches of industry which produce goods that the masses of the people need particularly. But you know that the expansion of production under capitalism takes place for entirely different motives, that capital flows into those branches of economy in which the rate of profit is highest. You will never compel a capitalist to incur loss to himself and agree to a lower rate of profit for the sake of satisfying the needs of the people. Without getting rid of the capitalists, without abolishing the principle of private property in the means of production, it is impossible to create planned economy.

**H.G. WELLS:** I agree with much of what you have said.

But I would like to stress the point that if a country as a whole adopts the principle of planned economy, if the government, gradually, step by step, begins consistently to apply this principle, the financial oligarchy will at last be abolished and socialism, in the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word, will be brought about. The effect of the ideas of Roosevelt's “New Deal” is most powerful, and in my opinion they are socialist ideas. It seems to me that instead of stressing the antagonism between the two worlds, we should, in the present circumstances, strive to establish a common tongue for all the constructive forces.

**J.V. STALIN:** In speaking of the impossibility of realizing the principles of planned economy while preserving the economic basis of capitalism, I do not in the least desire to belittle the outstanding personal qualities of Roosevelt, his initiative, courage and determination. Undoubtedly, Roosevelt stands out as one of the strongest figures among all the captains of the contemporary capitalist world. That is why I would like, once

again, to emphasize the point that my conviction that planned economy is impossible under the conditions of capitalism, does not mean that I have any doubts about the personal abilities, talent and courage of President Roosevelt. But if the circumstances are unfavorable, the most talented captain cannot reach the goal you refer to...

Theoretically, of course, the possibility of marching gradually, step by step, under the conditions of capitalism, towards the goal which you call socialism in the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word, is not precluded...

But what will this "socialism" be? At best, bridling to some extent, the most unbridled of individual representatives of capitalist profit, some increase in the application of the principle of regulation in national economy. That is all very well. But as soon as Roosevelt, or any other captain in the contemporary bourgeois world, proceeds to undertake something serious against the foundation of capitalism, he will inevitably suffer utter defeat. The banks, the industries, the large enterprises, the large farms are not in Roosevelt's hands. All these are private property. The railroads, the mercantile fleet, all these belong to private owners. And, finally, the army of skilled workers, the engineers, the technicians, these too are not at Roosevelt's command, they are at the command of the private owners; they all work for the private owners. We must not forget the functions of the State in the bourgeois world.

The State is an institution that organizes the defense of the country, organizes the maintenance of "order"; it is an apparatus for collecting taxes. The capitalist State does not deal much with economy in the strict sense of the word; the latter is not in the hands of the State. On the contrary, the State is in the hands of capitalist economy. That is why I fear that in spite of all his energies and abilities, Roosevelt will not achieve the goal you mention, if indeed that is his goal. Perhaps, in



the course of several generations it will be possible to approach this goal somewhat; but I personally think that even this is not very probable...

**H.G. WELLS:** Perhaps, I believe more strongly in the economic interpretation of politics than you do. Huge forces driving towards better organization, for the better functioning of the community, that is, for socialism, have been brought into action by invention and modern science. organization, and the regulation of individual action, have become mechanical necessities, irrespective of social theories. If we begin with the State control of the banks and then follow with the control of transport, of the heavy industries of industry in general, of commerce, etc., such an all-embracing control will be equivalent to the State ownership of all branches of national economy. This will be the process of socialization. Socialism and individualism are not opposites like black and white...

There are many intermediate stages between them...

There is individualism that borders on brigandage, and there is discipline and organization that are the equivalent of socialism. The introduction of planned economy depends, to a large degree, upon the organizers of economy, upon the skilled technical intelligentsia, who, step by step, can be converted to the socialist principles of organization. And this is the most important thing. Because organization comes before socialism. It is the more important fact...

Without organization the socialist idea is a mere idea...

**J.V. STALIN:** There is no, nor should there be, irreconcilable contrast between the individual and the collective, between the interests of the individual person and the interests of the collective. There should be no such contrast, because collectivism, socialism, does not deny, but combines individual interests with the inter-

ests of the collective. Socialism cannot abstract itself from individual interests. Socialist society alone can most fully satisfy these personal interests. More than that; socialist society alone can firmly safeguard the interests of the individual. In this sense there is no irreconcilable contrast between "individualism" and socialism. But can we deny the contrast between classes, between the propertied class, the capitalist class, and the toiling class, the proletarian class?

On the one hand we have the propertied class which owns the banks, the factories, the mines, transport, the plantations in colonies. These people see nothing but their own interests, their striving after profits.

They do not submit to the will of the collective; they strive to subordinate every collective to their will. On the other hand we have the class of the poor, the exploited class, which owns neither factories nor works, nor banks, which is compelled to live by selling its labor power to the capitalists which lacks the opportunity to satisfy its most elementary requirements. How can such opposite interests and strivings be reconciled? As far as I know, Roosevelt has not succeeded in finding the path of conciliation between these interests. And it is impossible, as experience has shown. Incidentally, you know the situation in the United States better than I do as I have never been there and I watch American affairs mainly from literature. But I have some experience in fighting for socialism, and this experience tells me that if Roosevelt makes a real attempt to satisfy the interests of the proletarian class at the expense of the capitalist class, the latter will put another president in his place. The capitalists will say: Presidents come and presidents go, but we go on forever; if this or that president does not protect our interests, we shall find another. What can the president oppose to the will of the capitalist class?

**H.G. WELLS:** I object to this simplified classification of mankind into poor and rich. Of course there is a category of people which strive only for profit. But are not these people regarded as nuisances in the West just as much as here? Are there not plenty of people in the West for whom profit is not an end, who own a certain amount of wealth, who want to invest and obtain a profit from this investment, but who do not regard this as the main object? They regard investment as an inconvenient necessity. Are there not plenty of capable and devoted engineers, organizers of economy, whose activities are stimulated by something other than profit? In my opinion there is a numerous class of capable people who admit that the present system is unsatisfactory and who are destined to play a great role in future socialist society. During the past few years I have been much engaged in and have thought of the need for conducting propaganda in favor of socialism and cosmopolitanism among wide circles of engineers, airmen, military technical people, etc. It is useless to approach these circles with two-track class war propoganda. These people understand the condition of the world. They understand that it is a bloody muddle, but they regard your simple class-war antagonism as nonsense.

**J.V. STALIN:** You object to the simplified classification of mankind into rich and poor. Of course there is a middle stratum, there is the technical intelligentsia that you have mentioned and among which there are very good and very honest people. Among them there are also dishonest and wicked people, there are all sorts of people among them, But first of all mankind is divided into rich and poor, into property owners and exploited; and to abstract oneself from this fundamental division and from the antagonism between poor and rich means abstracting oneself from the fundamental fact. I do not deny the existence of intermediate middle strata, which either take the side of one or the other of these two con-

flicting classes, or else take up a neutral or semi-neutral position in this struggle. But, I repeat, to abstract oneself from this fundamental division in society and from the fundamental struggle between the two main classes means ignoring facts. The struggle is going on and will continue. The outcome will be determined by the proletarian class, the working class.

**H.G. WELLS:** But are there not many people who are not poor, but who work and work productively?

**J.V. STALIN:** Of course, there are small landowners, artisans, small traders, but it is not these people who decide the fate of a country, but the toiling masses, who produce all the things society requires.

**H.G. WELLS:** But there are very different kinds of capitalists. There are capitalists who only think about profit, about getting rich; but there are also those who are prepared to make sacrifices. Take old Morgan for example. He only thought about profit; he was a parasite on society, simply, he merely accumulated wealth. But take Rockefeller. He is a brilliant organizer; he has set an example of how to organize the delivery of oil that is worthy of emulation. Or take Ford. Of course Ford is selfish. But is he not a passionate organizer of rationalized production from whom you take lessons? I would like to emphasize the fact that recently an important change in opinion towards the U.S.S.R. has taken place in English speaking countries. The reason for this, first of all, is the position of Japan and the events in Germany. But there are other reasons besides those arising from international politics. There is a more profound reason namely, the recognition by many people of the fact that the system based on private profit is breaking down. Under these circumstances, it seems to me, we must not bring to the forefront the antagonism between the two worlds, but should strive to combine all the constructive movements, all the constructive

forces in one line as much as possible. It seems to me that I am more to the Left than you, Mr. Stalin; I think the old system is nearer to its end than you think.

**J.V. STALIN:** In speaking of the capitalists who strive only for profit, only to get rich, I do not want to say that these are the most worthless people, capable of nothing else. Many of them undoubtedly possess great organizing talent, which I do not dream of denying. We Soviet people learn a great deal from the capitalists. And Morgan, whom you characterize so unfavorably, was undoubtedly a good, capable organizer. But if you mean people who are prepared to reconstruct the world, of course, you will not be able to find them in the ranks of those who faithfully serve the cause of profit. We and they stand at opposite poles. You mentioned Ford. Of course, he is a capable organizer of production. But don't you know his attitude to the working class?

Don't you know how many workers he throws on the street? The capitalist is riveted to profit; and no power on earth can tear him away from it. Capitalism will be abolished, not by "organizers" of production not by the technical intelligentsia, but by the working class, because the aforementioned strata do not play an independent role. The engineer, the organizer of production does not work as he would like to, but as he is ordered, in such a way as to serve the interests of his employers. There are exceptions of course; there are people in this stratum who have awakened from the intoxication of capitalism. The technical intelligentsia can, under certain conditions, perform miracles and greatly benefit mankind. But it can also cause great harm. We Soviet people have not a little experience of the technical intelligentsia.

After the October Revolution, a certain section of the technical intelligentsia refused to take part in the work of constructing the new society; they opposed this work of construction and sabotaged it.

We did all we possibly could to bring the technical intelligentsia into this work of construction; we tried this way and that. Not a little time passed before our technical intelligentsia agreed actively to assist the new system. Today the best section of this technical intelligentsia are in the front rank of the builders of socialist society. Having this experience we are far from underestimating the good and the bad sides of the technical intelligentsia and we know that on the one hand it can do harm, and on the other hand, it can perform "miracles." Of course, things would be different if it were possible, at one stroke, spiritually to tear the technical intelligentsia away from the capitalist world. But that is utopia.

Are there many of the technical intelligentsia who would dare break away from the bourgeois world and set to work reconstructing society? Do you think there are many people of this kind, say, in England or in France? No, there are few who would be willing to break away from their employers and begin reconstructing the world.

Besides, can we lose sight of the fact that in order to transform the world it is necessary to have political power? It seems to me, Mr. Wells, that you greatly underestimate the question of political power, that it entirely drops out of your conception.

What can those, even with the best intentions in the world, do if they are unable to raise the question of seizing power, and do not possess power? At best they can help the class which takes power, but they cannot change the world themselves. This can only be done by a great class which will take the place of the capitalist class and become the sovereign master as the latter was before. This class is the working class. Of course, the assistance of the technical intelligentsia must be accepted; and the latter in turn, must be assisted. But it must not be thought that the technical intelligentsia

can play an independent historical role. The transformation of the world is a great, complicated and painful process. For this task a great class is required. Big ships go on long voyages.

**H.G. WELLS:** Yes, but for long voyages a captain and navigator are required.

**J.V. STALIN:** That is true; but what is first required for a long voyage is a big ship. What is a navigator without a ship? An idle man.

**H.G. WELLS:** The big ship is humanity, not a class.

**J.V. STALIN:** You, Mr. Wells, evidently start out with the assumption that all men are good. I, however, do not forget that there are many wicked men. I do not believe in the goodness of the bourgeoisie.

**H.G. WELLS:** I remember the situation with regard to the technical intelligentsia several decades ago. At that time the technical intelligentsia was numerically small, but there was much to do and every engineer, technician and intellectual found his opportunity. That is why the technical intelligentsia was the least revolutionary class. Now, however, there is a superabundance of technical intellectuals, and their mentality has changed very sharply. The skilled man, who would formerly never listen to revolutionary talk, is now greatly interested in it. Recently I was dining with the Royal Society, our great English scientific society. The President's speech was a speech for social planning and scientific control. Thirty years ago, they would not have listened to what I say to them now. Today, the man at the head of the Royal Society holds revolutionary views and insists on the scientific reorganization of human society. Mentality changes. Your class-war propaganda has not kept pace with these facts.

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes, I know this, and this is to be explained by the fact that capitalist society is now in a cul-de-sac. The capitalists are seeking, but cannot find a way out of this cul-de-sac that would be compatible

with the dignity of this class, compatible with the interests of this class. They could, to some extent, crawl out of the crisis on their hands and knees, but they cannot find an exit that would enable them to walk out of it with head raised high, a way out that would not fundamentally disturb the interests of capitalism. This, of course, is realized by wide circles of the technical intelligentsia. A large section of it is beginning to realize the community of its interests with those of the class which is capable of pointing the way out of the cul-de-sac.

**H.G. WELLS:** You of all people know something about revolutions, Mr. Stalin, from the practical side. Do the masses ever rise? Is it not an established truth that all revolutions are made by a minority?

**J.V. STALIN:** To bring about a revolution a leading revolutionary minority is required; but the most talented, devoted and energetic minority would be helpless if it did not rely upon the at least passive support of millions.

**H.G. WELLS:** At least passive? Perhaps sub-conscious?

**J.V. STALIN:** Partly also the semi-instinctive and semiconscious, but without the support of millions, the best minority is impotent.

**H.G. WELLS:** I watch communist propaganda in the West and it seems to me that in modern conditions this propaganda sounds very old-fashioned, because it is insurrectionary propaganda. Propaganda in favor of the violent overthrow of the social system was all very well when it was directed against tyranny. But under modern conditions, when the system is collapsing anyhow, stress should be laid on efficiency, on competence, on productiveness, and not on insurrection.

It seems to me that the insurrectionary note is obsolete. The communist propaganda in the West is a nuisance to constructive-minded people.



**J.V. STALIN:** Of course the old system is breaking down and decaying. That is true. But it is also true that new efforts are being made by other methods, by every means, to protect, to save this dying system.

You draw a wrong conclusion from a correct postulate.

You rightly state that the old world is breaking down.

But you are wrong in thinking that it is breaking down of its own accord. No, the substitution of one social system for another is a complicated and long revolutionary process. It is not simply a spontaneous process, but a struggle, it is a process connected with the clash of classes. Capitalism is decaying, but it must not be compared simply with a tree which has decayed to such an extent that it must fall to the ground of its own accord. No, revolution, the substitution of one social system for another, has always been a struggle, a painful and a cruel struggle, a life and death struggle. And every time the people of the new world came into power they had to defend themselves against the attempts of the old world to restore the old power by force; these people of the new world always had to be on the alert, always had to be ready to repel the attacks of the old world upon the new system.

Yes, you are right when you say that the old social system is breaking down; but it is not breaking down of its own accord. Take Fascism for example.

Fascism is a reactionary force which is trying to preserve the old system by means of violence. What will you do with the fascists? Argue with them? Try to convince them? But this will have no effect upon them at all. Communists do not in the least idealize the methods of violence. But they, the Communists, do not want to be taken by surprise, they cannot count on the old world voluntarily departing from the stage, they see that the old system is violently defending itself, and that is why

the Communists say to the working class: Answer violence with violence; do all you can to prevent the old dying order from crushing you, do not permit it to put shackles on your hands, on the hands with which you will overthrow the old system. As you see, the Communists regard the substitution of one social system for another, not simply as a spontaneous and peaceful process, but as a complicated, long and violent process. Communists cannot ignore facts.

**H.G. WELLS:** But look at what is now going on in the capitalist world. The collapse is not a simple one; it is the outbreak of reactionary violence which is degenerating to gangsterism. And it seems to me that when it comes to a conflict with reactionary and unintelligent violence, socialists can appeal to the law, and instead of regarding the police as the enemy they should support them in the fight against the reactionaries. I think that it is useless operating with the methods of the old insurrectionary socialism.

**J.V. STALIN:** The Communists base themselves on rich historical experience which teaches that obsolete classes do not voluntarily abandon the stage of history.

Recall the history of England in the seventeenth century. Did not many say that the old social system had decayed? But did it not, nevertheless, require a Cromwell to crush it by force?

**H.G. WELLS:** Cromwell acted on the basis of the constitution and in the name of constitutional order.

**J.V. STALIN:** In the name of the constitution he resorted to violence, beheaded the king, dispersed Parliament, arrested some and beheaded others!

Or take an example from our history. Was it not clear for a long time that the tsarist system was decaying, was breaking down? But how much blood had to be shed in order to overthrow it?

And what about the October Revolution? Were there not plenty of people who knew that we alone, the Bolsheviks, were indicating the only correct way out?

Was it not clear that Russian capitalism had decayed?

But you know how great was the resistance, how much blood had to be shed in order to defend the October Revolution from all its enemies, internal and external.

Or take France at the end of the eighteenth century.

Long before 1789 it was clear to many how rotten the royal power, the feudal system was. But a popular insurrection, a clash of classes was not, could not be avoided. Why? Because the classes which must abandon the stage of history are the last to become convinced that their role is ended. It is impossible to convince them of this. They think that the fissures in the decaying edifice of the old order can be repaired and saved. That is why dying classes take to arms and resort to every means to save their existence as a ruling class.

**H.G. WELLS:** But there were not a few lawyers at the head of the Great French Revolution.

**J.V. STALIN:** Do you deny the role of the intelligentsia in revolutionary movements? Was the Great French Revolution a lawyers' revolution and not a popular revolution, which achieved victory by rousing vast masses of the people against feudalism and championed the interests of the Third Estate? And did the lawyers among the leaders of the Great French Revolution act in accordance with the laws of the old order? Did they not introduce new, bourgeois revolutionary laws?

The rich experience of history teaches that up to now not a single class has voluntarily made way for another class. There is no such precedent in world history. The Communists have learned this lesson of history. Communists would welcome the voluntary depar-

ture of the bourgeoisie. But such a turn of affairs is improbable; that is what experience teaches. That is why the Communists want to be prepared for the worst and call upon the working class to be vigilant, to be prepared for battle. Who wants a captain who lulls the vigilance of his army, a captain who does not understand that the enemy will not surrender, that he must be crushed? To be such a captain means deceiving, betraying the working class. That is why I think that what seems to you to be old-fashioned is in fact a measure of revolutionary expediency for the working class.

**H.G. WELLS:** I do not deny that force has to be used, but I think the forms of the struggle should fit as closely as possible to the opportunities presented by the existing laws, which must be defended against reactionary attacks. There is no need to disorganize the old system because it is disorganizing itself enough as it is. That is why it seems to me insurrection against the old order, against the law, is obsolete; old-fashioned. Incidentally, I deliberately exaggerate in order to bring the truth out more clearly. I can formulate my point of view in the following way:

First, I am for order; second, I attack the present system in so far as it cannot assure order; third, I think that class war propaganda may detach from socialism just those educated people whom socialism needs.

**J.V. STALIN:** In order to achieve a great object, an important social object, there must be a main force, a bulwark, a revolutionary class. Next it is necessary to organize the assistance of an auxiliary force for this main force; in this case this auxiliary force is the Party, to which the best forces of the intelligentsia belong. Just now you spoke about "educated people." But what educated people did you have in mind? Were there not plenty of educated people on the side of the old order in England in the seventeenth century, in France at the end of the eighteenth century, and in Russia in the

epoch of the October Revolution? The old order had in its service many highly educated people who defended the old order, who opposed the new order. Education is a weapon the effect of which is determined by the hands which wield it, by who is to be struck down.

Of course, the proletariat, socialism, needs highly educated people. Clearly, simpletons cannot help the proletariat to fight for socialism, to build a new society. I do not underestimate the role of the intelligentsia; on the contrary, I emphasize it. The question is, however, which intelligentsia are we discussing?

Because there are different kinds of intelligentsia.

**H.G. WELLS:** There can be no revolution without a radical change in the educational system. It is sufficient to quote two examples: The example of the German Republic, which did not touch the old educational system, and therefore never became a republic; and the example of the British Labour Party, which lacks the determination to insist on a radical change in the educational system.

**J.V. STALIN:** That is a correct observation.

Permit me now to reply to your three points.

First, the main thing for the revolution is the existence of a social bulwark. This bulwark of the revolution is the working class.

Second, an auxiliary force is required, that which the Communists call a Party. To the Party belong the intelligent workers and those elements of the technical intelligentsia which are closely connected with the working class. The intelligentsia can be strong only if it combines with the working class.

If it opposes the working class it becomes insignificant.

Third, political power is required as a lever for change. The new political power creates the new laws, the new order, which is revolutionary order.

I do not stand for any kind of order. I stand for order that corresponds to the interests of the working class. If, however, any of the laws of the old order can be utilized in the interests of the struggle for the new order, the old laws should be utilized.

I cannot object to your postulate that the present system should be attacked in so far as it does not ensure the necessary order for the people.

And, finally, you are wrong if you think that the Communists are enamored of violence. They would be very pleased to drop violent methods if the ruling class agreed to give way to the working class. But the experience of history speaks against such an assumption.

**H.G. WELLS:** There was a case in the history of England, however, of a class voluntarily handing over power to another class. In the period between 1830 and 1870, the aristocracy, whose influence was still very considerable at the end of the eighteenth century, voluntarily, without a severe struggle, surrendered power to the bourgeoisie, which serves as a sentimental support of the monarchy. Subsequently, this transference of power led to the establishment of the rule of the financial oligarchy.

**J.V. STALIN:** But you have imperceptibly passed from questions of revolution to questions of reform. This is not the same thing. Don't you think that the Chartist movement played a great role in the Reforms in England in the nineteenth century?

**H.G. WELLS:** The Chartists did little and disappeared without leaving a trace.

**J.V. STALIN:** I do not agree with you. The Chartists, and the strike movement which they organized, played a great role; they compelled the ruling class to make a number of concessions in regard to the franchise, in regard to abolishing the so-called "rotten boroughs," and in regard to some of the points of the "Charter."

Chartism played a not unimportant historical role and compelled a section of the ruling classes to make certain concessions, reforms, in order to avert great shocks. Generally speaking, it must be said that of all the ruling classes, the ruling classes of England, both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, proved to be the cleverest, most flexible from the point of view of their class interests, from the point of view of maintaining their power. Take as an example, say, from modern history, the general strike in England in 1926. The first thing any other bourgeoisie would have done in the face of such an event, when the General Council of Trade Unions called for a strike, would have been to arrest the trade union leaders.

The British bourgeoisie did not do that, and it acted cleverly from the point of view of its own interests.

I cannot conceive of such a flexible strategy being employed by the bourgeoisie in the United States, Germany or France. In order to maintain their rule, the ruling classes of Great Britain have never opposed small concessions, reforms. But it would be a mistake to think that these reforms were revolutionary.

**H.G. WELLS:** You have a higher opinion of the ruling classes of my country than I have. But is there a great difference between a small revolution and a great reform? Is not a reform a small revolution?

**J.V. STALIN:** Owing to pressure from below, the pressure of the masses, the bourgeoisie may sometimes concede certain partial reforms while remaining on the basis of the existing social-economic system.

Acting in this way, it calculates that these concessions are necessary in order to preserve its class rule. This is the essence of reform. Revolution, however, means the transference of power from one class to another. That is why it is impossible to describe any reform as revolution. That is why we cannot count on the change of social systems taking place as an imper-

ceptible transition from one system to another by means of reforms, by the ruling class making concessions.

**H.G. WELLS:** I am very grateful to you for this talk which has meant a great deal to me. In explaining things to me you probably called to mind how you had to explain the fundamentals of socialism in the illegal circles before the revolution. At the present time there are only two persons to whose opinion, to whose every word, millions are listening: you, and Roosevelt. Others may preach as much as they like; what they say will never be printed or heeded.

I cannot yet appreciate what has been done in your country; I only arrived yesterday. But I have already seen the happy faces of healthy men and women and I know that something very considerable is being done here. The contrast with 1920 is astounding.

**J.V. STALIN:** Much more could have been done had we Bolsheviks been cleverer.

**H.G. WELLS:** No, if human beings were cleverer. It would be a good thing to invent a five-year plan for the reconstruction of the human brain which obviously lacks many things needed for a perfect social order.

*(Laughter)*

**J.V. STALIN:** Don't you intend to stay for the Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union?

**H.G. WELLS:** Unfortunately, I have various engagements to fulfill and I can stay in the USSR only for a week.

I came to see you and I am very satisfied by our talk. But I intend to discuss with such Soviet writers as I can meet the possibility of their affiliating to the PEN Club. This is an international organization of writers founded by Galsworthy; after his death I became president. The organization is still weak, but it has branches in many countries, and what is more important, the speeches of



the members are widely reported in the press. It insists upon this free expression of opinion – even of opposition opinion.

I hope to discuss this point with Gorky. I do not know if you are prepared yet for that much freedom here.

**J.V. STALIN:** We Bolsheviks call it “self-criticism.” It is widely used in the USSR. If there is anything I can do to help you I shall be glad to do so.

**H.G. WELLS:** *(Expresses thanks.)*

**J.V. STALIN:** *(Expresses thanks for the visit.)*

# An Interview With The German Author Emil Ludwig<sup>2</sup>

**E. LUDWIG:** I am very much obliged to you for having found it possible to grant me this interview. For more than twenty years I have been studying the lives and deeds of prominent historical personages. I believe I am a good judge of people, but on the other hand, I do not know anything about economic conditions.

**J.V. STALIN:** You are very modest.

**E. LUDWIG:** No, that is a fact. That is why I will put questions to you that may seem queer to you. Today, here in the Kremlin, I saw certain relics of Peter the Great, and the first question I should like to ask you is this: Do you think there is any parallel between yourself and Peter the Great? Do you regard yourself as continuing the cause of Peter the Great?

**J.V. STALIN:** Not in any way. Historical parallels are always dangerous. The one in question is absurd.

**E. LUDWIG:** But Peter the Great did a great deal to develop his country and to transplant to Russia the culture of the West.

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes, of course. Peter the Great did a great deal to elevate the landlord class and to develop the rising merchant class. Peter did a great deal to create and strengthen the national State of the landlords and merchants. It should be added that the elevation of the landlord class, the encouragement of the rising merchant class, and the strengthening of the national State of these classes, was effected at the cost of the peasant serf who was bled white. As for myself, I am merely a

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pupil of Lenin, and my aim is to be a worthy pupil of his. The task to which I have devoted my life is to elevate another class—the working class. That task is, not to strengthen any national State, but to strengthen a socialist State—and that means an international State. Everything that contributes to strengthening that State helps to strengthen the international working class. If in my efforts to elevate the working class and strengthen the socialist State of that class, every step taken were not directed towards strengthening and improving the position of the working class, I should consider my life as purposeless.

You will see therefore that your parallel is unsuitable. As to Lenin and Peter the Great, the latter was but a drop in the sea—Lenin was a whole ocean.

**E. LUDWIG:** Marxism denies that personalities play an important role in history. Do you not see any contradiction between the materialist conception of history and the fact that you, after all, do admit the important role played by historical personalities?

**J.V. STALIN:** No, there is no contradiction. Marxism does not deny that prominent personalities play an important role, nor the fact that history is made by people. In *The Poverty of Philosophy* and in other works of Marx you will find it stated that it is people who make history. But of course, people do not make history according to their own fancy or the promptings of their imagination. Every new generation encounters definite conditions already existing, ready-made, when that generation was born. And if great people are worth anything at all, it is only to the extent that they correctly understand these conditions and know how to alter them. If they fail to understand these conditions and try to change them according to their own fancies, they will put themselves in a quixotic position. So you will see that precisely according to Marx, people must not be contrasted to conditions. It is as people who make history,

but they make it only to the extent that they correctly understand the conditions they found ready-made, and to the extent that they know how to change those conditions. That, at least, is the way we Russian Bolsheviks understand Marx. And we have been studying Marx for a good many years.

**E. LUDWIG:** Some thirty years ago, when I studied at the university, many German professors, who considered themselves believers in the materialist conception of history, taught us that Marxism denied the role of heroes, the role of heroic personalities in history.

**J.V. STALIN:** They were vulgarizers of Marxism. Marxism never denied the role of heroes. On the contrary, it admits that they play a considerable role, with the provisos that I have just made.

**E. LUDWIG:** Placed around the table at which we are now seated there are sixteen chairs. Abroad, it is known on the one hand, that the U.S.S.R. is a country in which everything is supposed to be decided by collegiums, but on the other hand, it is known that everything is decided by individual persons. Who really decides?

**J.V. STALIN:** No, single persons cannot decide. The decisions of single persons are always, or nearly always, one-sided decisions. In every collegium, in every collective body, there are people whose opinion must be reckoned with. In every collegium, in every collective body, there are people who may express incorrect opinions. From the experience of three revolutions we know that approximately out of every 100 decisions made by single persons, that have not been tested and corrected collectively, 90 are one-sided. In our leading body, the Central Committee of our Party, which guides all our Soviet and Party organizations, there are about 70 members. Among these 70 members of the Central Committee there are to be found the best of our industrial leaders, the best of our co-operative leaders, the

best organizers of distribution, our best military men, our best propagandists and agitators, our best experts on soviet farms, on collective farms, on individual peasant agriculture, our best experts on the nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union and on national policy. In this areopagus is concentrated the wisdom of our Party. It is possible for every one to correct the opinion or proposals of any one individual. Every one is able to contribute his experience. Were it otherwise, if decisions had been taken by individuals, we should have committed very serious mistakes in our work. But since every one is able to correct the errors of individual persons, and since we pay heed to such corrections, we arrive at more or less correct decisions.

**E. LUDWIG:** You have many years experience of underground work. You have had occasion to transport illegally, arms, literature, and so forth. Do you not think that the enemies of the Soviet government can learn from your experience and fight the Soviet government with the same methods?

**J.V. STALIN:** That, of course, is quite possible.

**E. LUDWIG:** Is that not the reason for the severity and ruthlessness displayed by your government in its fight with its enemies?

**J.V. STALIN:** No, that is not the chief reason. One might adduce certain illustrations from history. When the Bolsheviks first assumed power they adopted an attitude of mildness towards their enemies. The Mensheviks continued to exist legally and conduct their own paper. The Socialist Revolutionaries also continued to exist legally and had their own paper. Even the Constitutional Democrats continued to publish their own paper. When General Krasnov organized his counter-revolutionary attack on Leningrad and fell into our hands, according to the rules of warfare, we might at least have kept him prisoner. In fact, we ought to have shot him. But we released him on his "word of honor."

What was the result? It soon became clear that such mildness was only serving to undermine the strength of the Soviet government. It was a mistake to have displayed such mildness towards the enemies of the working class. To have persisted in that mistake would have been a crime against the working class and a betrayal of its interests. That very soon became only too clear. It soon became obvious that the milder our attitude towards our enemies, the more bitter their resistance. Very soon the Right Socialist Revolutionaries—Gotz and the like—and the Right Mensheviks began to organize the military cadets in Leningrad for the purpose of carrying out counter-revolutionary attacks, as a result of which many of our revolutionary sailors perished. This very Krasnov, whom we had released on his “word of honor,” organized the White Guard Cossacks. He joined forces with Mamontov and for two years waged an armed struggle against the Soviet government. It very soon appeared that behind the White Guard generals stood the agents of western capitalist states, such as France, England, America and Japan. And so we became convinced that mildness was a mistake. Experience taught us that the only way to cope with such enemies is to adopt a ruthless policy of suppression.

**E. LUDWIG:** It seems to me that a large part of the population of the Soviet Union lives in fear and dread of the Soviet government, and that the stability of the Soviet government is based to a certain extent on that fear. I should like to know what feelings are aroused in you personally by the knowledge that in order to maintain the stability of the government it is necessary to inspire fear. In your relations with your comrades, of course, with your friends, you adopt quite different methods, and not methods of fear. Yet the population has to be inspired with fear.

**J.V. STALIN:** You are mistaken. Incidentally, your mistake is shared by many. Do you think it possible to maintain power and enjoy the support of millions for a period of fourteen years by methods of intimidation and terror? No, that is impossible. The tsarist government knew better than any other how to intimidate. It had a long and vast experience in that field. The European, and particularly the French bourgeoisie, helped tsarism in every way and taught it to terrorize the population. Yet, in spite of that experience, and in spite of the aid of the European bourgeoisie, the policy of intimidation led to the collapse of tsarism.

**E. LUDWIG:** But the Romanovs maintained themselves for 300 years.

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes, but how much unrest and how many rebellions occurred during these 300 years? There was the rebellion of Stenka Razin, the rebellion of Emilian Pugachev, the rising of the Decembrists, the revolution of 1905, the revolution of February 1917 and the October Revolution. And I need hardly mention that the political and cultural life of the country is now fundamentally different from what it was under the old regime, when it was the darkness, the ignorance, the submissiveness and political subjection of the masses that enabled the “rulers” of that time to remain in power for a more or less lengthy period.

As to the people, the workers and peasants of the U.S.S.R., they are not so tame, so submissive and intimidated as you imagine. Many people in Europe have old-fashioned ideas about the people of the U.S.S.R. they picture the people of Russia as being firstly, submissive and secondly, lazy. That is an out-of-date and fundamentally wrong conception. It arose in Europe in those days when the Russian landlords used to flock to Paris to dissipate the wealth they had acquired by plunder and to waste their days in idleness. They were indeed spineless and useless people. That is how the idea of

“Russian laziness” arose. But that idea is not applicable to the Russian workers and peasants, to those who earned, and earn their daily bread by their own labor. Strange indeed, to consider the Russian peasants and workers, who in a short period of time made three revolutions, smashed tsarism and the bourgeoisie, and who are now triumphantly engaged in the building of socialism, as submissive and lazy.

You just asked me whether everything in this country is decided by one person. No, under no conditions would our workers now tolerate the domination of one person. Individuals of the greatest authority are reduced to nonentities as soon as they lose the confidence of the masses and as soon as they lose contact with the masses. Plekhanov used to enjoy exceptional authority. And what happened? As soon as he began to commit political errors, the workers forgot him; they abandoned him and forgot him. Another instance: Trotsky. Trotsky also used to enjoy very great authority, although of course, not as much as Plekhanov. What happened? As soon as he lost contact with the workers, he was forgotten.

**E. LUDWIG:** Entirely forgotten?

**J.V. STALIN:** They remember him sometimes—with bitterness.

**E. LUDWIG:** Do they all remember him with bitterness?

**J.V. STALIN:** As far as our class-conscious workers are concerned, they remember Trotsky with bitterness, with irritation, with hatred.

Of course, there is a certain small section of the population that really does fear the Soviet government, and fights the Soviet government. I am referring to the remnants of the classes that are dying out and are being liquidated, and primarily to that small section of the peasantry—the kulaks. But in this case, it is not merely a policy of intimidation, a policy that is indeed being pur-



sued. As you know, we Bolsheviks in this case go farther than mere intimidation: our object is to abolish this bourgeois stratum.

But as to the toiling population of the U.S.S.R., the workers and the peasants, who represent not less than 90 per cent of the population, they stand for the Soviet government and the overwhelming majority of them actively support the Soviet regime. They do so, because that regime furthers the fundamental interests of the workers and peasants. This is the basis for the stability of the Soviet government, and not an alleged policy of intimidation.

**E. LUDWIG:** I am very much obliged to you for that reply. Please forgive me if I ask you a question that may appear estrange to you. Your biography contains incidents of "brigandage" so to speak. Have you ever been interested in the personality of Stenka Razin, and what is your attitude towards him as an "ideological brigand?"

**J.V. STALIN:** We Bolsheviks have always been interested in such figures as Bolotnikov, Razin, Pugachev, and is on. We regard the acts of these people as the reflection of the seething unrest of the oppressed classes and of the spontaneous revolt of the peasantry against the feudal yoke. We have always studied with interest the history of these first attempts at revolt on the part of the peasantry. But of course, no analogy can be drawn between them and the Bolsheviks. Isolated peasant revolts, even when they are not of the bandit and unorganized character of that of Stenka Razin, cannot be successful. Peasant revolts can be successful only if they are combined with revolts of the workers and if the peasant revolts are led by the workers. Only a combined revolt led by the working class has any chance of achieving its aim. Moreover, when we speak of

Razin and Pugachev, it must never be forgotten that they were tsarists: they were opposed to the landlords, but were in favor of a "good tsar." That was their motto.

So you see, no analogy with the Bolsheviks can be drawn here.

**E. LUDWIG:** Permit me to ask you certain questions concerning your biography. When I saw Masaryk, he told me that he was conscious of being a socialist already, at the age of six. What made you a socialist, and when did you become one?

**J.V. STALIN:** I cannot assert that I was already drawn towards socialism at the age of six. Not even at the age of ten or twelve. I joined the revolutionary movement at the age of fifteen, when I became connected with certain illegal groups of Russian Marxists in Transcaucasia. These groups exerted a great influence on me and instilled in me a taste for illegal Marxian literature.

**E. LUDWIG:** What drove you to become a rebel? Was it, perhaps, because your parents treated you badly?

**J.V. STALIN:** No. My parents were uneducated people, but they did not treat me badly by any means. It was different in the theological seminary of which I was then a student. In protest against the humiliating regime and the jesuitical methods that prevailed in the seminary, I was ready to become, and eventually did become, a revolutionary, a believer in Marxism as the only genuinely revolutionary doctrine.

**E. LUDWIG:** But do you not grant the Jesuits any good qualities?

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes, they are methodical and persevering in their work. But the basis of all their methods is spying, prying, peering into people's souls, to subject them to petty torment. What is there good in that? For instance, the spying in the boarding house. At nine o'clock the bell rings for morning tea, we go to the din-

ing hall, and when we return we find that a search has been made and all our boxes have been turned inside out. . . . What is there good in that?

**E. LUDWIG:** I observe in the Soviet Union an extreme respect for everything American, I might almost say a worship of everything American, in other words, of the land of the dollar, of the most consistent of capitalist countries. This feeling is also entertained by your working class, and not only towards tractors and automobiles, but to the Americans generally. How do you explain that?

**J.V. STALIN:** You are exaggerating. We have no particular respect for everything American. But we respect the efficiency the Americans display in everything in industry, in technology, in literature and in life. We never forget that the U.S.A. is a capitalist country. But among the Americans there are many healthy people, both mentally and physically, who take up a healthy attitude towards work and towards practical affairs. We respect that efficiency, that simplicity of approach. In spite of the fact that America is a highly developed capitalist country, their industrial methods and productive habits contain something of the democratic spirit; and that cannot be said of the old European capitalist countries where the haughty spirit of the feudal aristocracy still prevails.

**E. LUDWIG:** You do not even suspect how right you are.

**J.V. STALIN:** Perhaps I do, who knows? In spite of the fact that feudalism as a social system has been destroyed in Europe, considerable relics survive in life and manners. Engineers, specialists, scientists and writers, continue to emerge from feudal circles, who carry the haughty spirit of the nobility into industry, technology, science and literature. Feudal traditions have not been completely destroyed. That cannot be said of America, which is a country of "free colonists," without

a landlord class, and without aristocrats. Hence the soundness and comparative simplicity of American habits in productive life. Our industrial leaders who have risen from the working class and who have been to America, immediately noticed this trait. They relate, not without a feeling of pleasant surprise, that in America it is difficult in the course of work to distinguish the engineer from the worker by mere outward appearance. They like that, of course. But in Europe the case is entirely different.

But if we are to speak of our sympathies toward any particular nation, or rather, to the majority of the population of any particular nation, then of course, we must speak of our sympathy for the Germans. Our feelings for the Americans cannot be compared with our sympathies for the Germans.

**E. LUDWIG:** Why particularly the Germans?

**J.V. STALIN:** I simply mention it as a fact.

**E. LUDWIG:** Serious fears have recently been expressed by certain German politicians that the traditional policy of friendship between the U.S.S.R. and Germany may be forced into the background. These fears arose as a result of the negotiations between the U.S.S.R. and Poland. Should the present frontiers of Poland be recognized by the U.S.S.R. as a result of these negotiations, it would cause severe disillusionment among the whole of the German people, who have hitherto believed that the U.S.S.R. is opposed to the Versailles system and has no intention of recognizing it.

**J.V. STALIN:** I know that a certain dissatisfaction and alarm is noticeable among certain German statesmen, who fear that the Soviet Union, in its negotiations, or in any treaty that may be concluded with Poland, may take some step that would imply that the Soviet Union gives its sanction to, or guarantees, the possessions and frontiers of Poland. In my opinion such fears are groundless. We have always declared our willingness

to conclude pacts of non-aggression with any government. We have already concluded such pacts with a number of countries. We have openly declared our desire to sign a pact of non-aggression with Poland. And when we declare that we are ready to sign a pact of non-aggression with Poland, it is not a mere empty statement; it means that we actually do want to sign such a pact. We are politicians of a peculiar breed, if you like. There are politicians who promise a thing one day, and next day either forget all about it, or else deny that they promised any such thing, and do so without blushing. That is not our way. Whatever we do abroad inevitably becomes known inside the country, to all workers and peasants. If we declared one thing, and did another, we should forfeit our authority. As soon as the Poles declared their willingness to start negotiations with us regarding a pact of non-aggression, we naturally consented and began negotiations.

What, from the point of view of the Germans, is the most dangerous thing that might happen? A change of attitude towards the Germans for the worse? But there is no foundation for that. We, like the Poles, must declare in the pact that we shall not resort to force, or aggression, in order to change the frontiers of Poland bordering the U.S.S.R., or to violate their independence. Just as we make such a promise to the Poles, so they must make a similar promise to us. Without such a point, namely to the effect that we shall not resort to war in order to violate the independence or the integrity of the frontiers of our respective States, no pact could be concluded. Without that, a pact would be out of the question. That is the most we can do. Does that mean recognition of the Versailles system? It does not. Does it mean guaranteeing frontiers? It does not. We never have been guarantors for Poland and never shall be, just as Poland never has been, and never will be a guarantor

of our frontiers. Our friendly relations with Germany will remain what they have been hitherto. That is my firm conviction.

Therefore, the misgivings of which you speak are entirely groundless. Those misgivings arose owing to rumors that were spread by certain Poles and Frenchmen. They will disappear when we publish the pact, that is, if Poland signs it. It will then be seen that it contains nothing directed against Germany.

**E. LUDWIG:** I am very much obliged to you for that statement. Permit me to ask you the following question. You speak of "equalitarianism," lending the term an ironical meaning in respect of general equality. But is not general equality a socialist ideal?

**J.V. STALIN:** The kind of socialism under which everybody would receive the same pay, an equal quantity of meat, an equal quantity, of bread, would wear the same kind of clothes and would receive the same kind of goods and in equal quantities—such a kind of socialism is unknown to Marxism. All that Marxism declares is that until classes have been completely abolished, and until work has been transformed from being a means of maintaining existence, into a prime necessity of life, into voluntary labor performed for the benefit of society, people will continue to be paid for their labor in accordance with the amount of labor performed. "From each according to his capacity, to each according to the work he performs," such is the Marxian formula of socialism, i.e., the first stage of communism, the first stage of a communist society. Only in the highest phase of communism will people, working in accordance with their capacity, receive recompense therefor in accordance with their needs: "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs."

It is obvious that people's needs vary and will vary under socialism. Socialism never denied that people differed in their tastes, and in the quantity and quality of their needs. Read Marx's criticism of Stirner's inclination toward equalitarianism; read Marx's criticism of the Gotha Programme of 1875; read the subsequent works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and you will see how severely they attacked equalitarianism. The roots of equalitarianism lie in the mentality of the peasant, in the psychology of share and share alike, the psychology of primitive peasant "communism." Equalitarianism is entirely alien to Marxian socialism. It is those who know nothing about Marxism who have the primitive idea that the Russian Bolsheviks want to pool all wealth and then share it out equally. It is the idea of those who have never had anything in common with Marxism. It was the idea of communism entertained by such people as the primitive "communists" of the time of Cromwell and the French Revolution. But Marxism and Russian Bolshevism have nothing in common with the equalitarian "communists."

**E. LUDWIG:** You are smoking a cigarette. Where is your legendary pipe, Mr. Stalin? You once said that words and legends pass, but deeds remain. But you will believe me when I say that millions of people abroad, who know nothing of certain of your wordy and deeds, nevertheless know about your legendary pipe.

**J.V. STALIN:** I left my pipe at home.

**E. LUDWIG:** I will ask you a question that may astonish you greatly.

**J.V. STALIN:** We Russian Bolsheviks have long forgotten how to be astonished.

**E. LUDWIG:** Aye, and we in Germany too.

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes, you in Germany, too, will soon forget how to be astonished.

**E. LUDWIG:** My question is as follows. You have frequently undergone risks and dangers. You have been persecuted. You have taken part in battles. A number of your close friends have perished. You have survived. How do you explain that? Do you believe in fate?

**J.V. STALIN:** No, I do not believe in fate. Bolsheviks, Marxists, do not believe in "fate." The idea of fate, of Schicksal, is a superstition, and absurdity, a survival of mythology, like that of the ancient Greeks, whose goddess of fate controlled the destinies of men.

**E. LUDWIG:** In other words, the fact that you survived is mere chance?

**J.V. STALIN:** There are internal and external causes, is combination of which led to the fact that I did not perish. But entirely independent of that, somebody else might have been in my place, for somebody must sit here. Fate is mythical, something contrary to natural law. I do not believe in mysticism. Of course, there were reasons why danger passed me by. But there may have been a series of other chances, of other causes, which may have led to the contrary result. So-called fate has nothing to do with it.

**E. LUDWIG:** Lenin spent many years abroad as an exile. You did not have occasion to be abroad for long periods. Do you regard it as a drawback to yourself; do you believe that greater benefits were brought to the revolution by people who, having been in exile abroad, had the opportunity to make a thorough study of Europe, but who, on the other hand, lost direct contact with the people; or that greater benefits were brought by those revolutionaries who carried on their work here, but who knew little of Europe?

**J.V. STALIN:** Lenin must be excluded from that comparison. Very few of those who remained in Russia were as closely associated with Russian affairs and with the working class movement within the country as was Lenin, although he spent a longtime abroad. Whenever I



visited him abroad—in 1907, 1908 and 1912—I saw the heaps of letters he had received from practical workers in Russia. Lenin always knew more than those who stayed in Russia. He always regarded his stay abroad as a burden.

Of course, there are in our Party and its leading bodies far more comrades who have never been abroad than former exiles, and of course they were able to bring more advantage to the revolution than those who were in exile. There are very few former exiles left in our Party. There are about 100 or 200 in all, among the two million members of the Party. Of the 70 members of the Central Committee not more than three or four lived in exile abroad.

As regards knowledge of Europe and a study of Europe, of course, those who wished to study Europe had a better opportunity to do so while living in Europe. From that point of view, those of us who have not lived long abroad, lost something. But living abroad is not essential in order to study European economics, technology, the leading cadres of the working class movement, literature—fiction and scientific literature. Other conditions being equal, it is of course easier to study Europe while living in Europe. But the disadvantage of those who have not lived long in Europe is not very great. On the contrary, I know many comrades who were twenty years abroad, lived somewhere in Charlottenburg or in the Latin Quarter, spent years sitting in cafes and consuming beer, and yet did not study Europe and failed to understand Europe.

**E. LUDWIG:** Do you not consider that among the Germans as a nation the love of order is more highly developed than the love of freedom?

**J.V. STALIN:** There was a time when people in Germany did indeed respect the law. When I spent two or three months in Berlin in 1907, we Russians Bolsheviks used to laugh at certain of our German friends for their

respect of the law. There was, for instance, an anecdote to the effect that on one occasion the Berlin Committee of the Social Democratic Party organized a demonstration fixed for a certain day and hour at which the members of all the suburban organizations were to attend. A group of about 200 from one of the suburbs arrived in the city punctually at the hour appointed, but they failed to appear at the demonstration. It turned out that they waited two hours on the platform of the station because the ticket collector at the exit was missing, and there was nobody to take their tickets. It was said in jest that a Russian comrade had to show them an easy way out of the situation, namely, to leave the platform without surrendering their tickets . . .

But is there anything like that in Germany now? Is there respect for the law in Germany today? What about the National Socialists, who should be the first to guard bourgeois law and order, do they not violate the laws, break up workers' clubs and murder workers with impunity? I will not speak of the workers, who it appears to me, long ago lost all respect for bourgeois law and order. Aye, the Germans have changed considerably in these days.

**E. LUDWIG:** Under what conditions will it be possible finally and completely to unite the working class under the leadership of one party? Why, as the Communists declare, is such unification of the working class possible only after the proletarian revolution?

**J.V. STALIN:** It is easier to achieve the union of the working class around the Communist Party as a result of a victorious proletarian revolution. But undoubtedly it will be achieved in the main even before the revolution.

**E. LUDWIG:** Is ambition a stimulus or a hindrance to the activities of a great historical personage?

**J.V. STALIN:** The part played by ambition varies under different conditions. Depending on conditions, ambition may be a stimulus or a hindrance to the activities of a great historical personage. Most frequently it is a hindrance.

**E. LUDWIG:** Is the October Revolution in any sense at all the continuation and the culmination of the Great French Revolution?

**J.V. STALIN:** The October Revolution is neither the continuation nor the culmination of the Great French Revolution. The purpose of the French Revolution was to put an end to feudalism and establish capitalism. The aim of the October Revolution is to put an end to capitalism and to establish socialism.

# Interview Between J. Stalin and Roy Howard<sup>3</sup>

**R. HOWARD:** What, in your opinion, would be the consequences of the recent events in Japan for the situation in the Far East?

**J.V. STALIN:** So far it is difficult to say. Too little material is available to do so. The picture is not sufficiently clear.

**R. HOWARD:** What will be the Soviet attitude should Japan launch the long predicted military drive against Outer Mongolia?

**J.V. STALIN:** If Japan should venture to attack the Mongolian People's Republic and encroach upon its independence, we will have to help the Mongolian People's Republic. Stomonyakov, Litvinov's assistant, recently informed the Japanese ambassador in Moscow of this, and pointed to the immutable friendly relations which the U.S.S.R. has been maintaining with the Mongolian People's Republic since 1921. We will help the Mongolian People's Republic just as we helped it in 1921.

**R. HOWARD:** Would a Japanese attempt to seize Ulan-Bator make positive action by the U.S.S.R. a necessity?

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes.

**R. HOWARD:** Have recent events developed any new Japanese activities in this region which are construed by the Soviets as of an aggressive nature?

**J.V. STALIN:** The Japanese, I think, are continuing to concentrate troops on the frontiers of the Mongolian People's Republic, but no new attempts at frontier conflicts are so far observed.

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3 March 1, 1936.

**R. HOWARD:** The Soviet Union appears to believe that Germany and Poland have aggressive designs against the Soviet Union, and are planning military cooperation.

Poland, however, protested her unwillingness to permit any foreign troops using her territory as a basis for operations against a third nation. How does the Soviet Union envisage such aggression by Germany? From what position, in what direction would the German forces operate?

**J.V. STALIN:** History shows that when any state intends to make war against another state, even not adjacent, it begins to seek for frontiers across which it can reach the frontiers of the state it wants to attack, Usually, the aggressive state finds such frontiers.

It either finds them with the aid of force, as was the case in 1914 when Germany invaded Belgium in order to strike at France, or it “borrows” such a frontier, as Germany, for example, did from Latvia in 1918, in her drive to Leningrad. I do not know precisely what frontiers Germany may adapt to her aims, but I think she will find people willing to “lend” her a frontier.

**R. HOWARD:** Seemingly, the entire world today is predicting another great war. If war proves inevitable, when, Mr. Stalin, do you think it will come?

**J.V. STALIN:** It is impossible to predict that. War may break out unexpectedly. Wars are not declared, nowadays. They simply start. On the other hand, however, I think the positions of the friends of peace are becoming stronger. The friends of peace can work openly. They rely on the power of public opinion. They have at their command instruments like the League of Nations, for example. This is where the friends of peace have the advantage. Their strength lies in the fact that their activities against war are backed by the will of the broad masses of the people. There is not a people in the world that wants war. As for the enemies of peace, they

are compelled to work secretly. That is where the enemies of peace are at a disadvantage. Incidentally, it is not precluded that precisely because of this they may decide upon a military adventure as an act of desperation.

One of the latest successes the friends of peace have achieved is the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance by the French Chamber of Deputies. To a certain extent, this pact is an obstacle to the enemies of peace.

**R. HOWARD:** Should war come, Mr. Stalin, where is it most likely to break out? Where are the war clouds the most menacing, in the East or in the West?

**J.V. STALIN:** In my opinion there are two seats of war danger. The first is in the Far East, in the zone of Japan. I have in mind the numerous statements made by Japanese military men containing threats against other powers. The second seat is in the zone of Germany. It is hard to say which is the most menacing, but both exist and are active. Compared with these two principal seats of war danger, the Italian-Abyssinian war is an episode. At present, the Far Eastern seat of danger reveals the greatest activity. However, the center of this danger may shift to Europe. This is indicated, for example, by the interview which Herr Hitler recently gave to a French newspaper. In this interview Hitler seems to have tried to say peaceful things, but he sprinkled his "peacefulness" so plentifully with threats against both France and the Soviet Union that nothing remained of his "peacefulness." You see, even when Herr Hitler wants to speak of peace he cannot avoid uttering threats. This is symptomatic.

**R. HOWARD:** What situation or condition, in your opinion, furnishes the chief war menace today?

**J.V. STALIN:** Capitalism.

**R. HOWARD:** In which specific manifestation of capitalism?

**J.V. STALIN:** Its imperialist, usurpatory manifestation.

You remember how the first World War arose. It arose out of the desire to re-divide the world. Today we have the same background. There are capitalist states which consider that they were cheated in the previous redistribution of spheres of influence, territories, sources of raw materials, markets, etc., and which would want another redivision that would be in their favor. Capitalism, in its imperialist phase, is a system which considers war to be a legitimate instrument for settling international disputes, a legal method in fact, if not in law.

**R. HOWARD:** May there not be an element of danger in the genuine fear existent in what you term capitalistic countries of an intent on the part of the Soviet Union to force its political theories on other nations?

**J.V. STALIN:** There is no justification whatever for such fears. If you think that Soviet people want to change the face of surrounding states, and by forcible means at that, you are entirely mistaken. Of course, Soviet people would like to see the face of surrounding states changed, but that is the business of the surrounding states. I fail to see what danger the surrounding states can perceive in the ideas of the Soviet people if these states are really sitting firmly in the saddle.

**R. HOWARD:** Does this, your statement, mean that the Soviet Union has to any degree abandoned its plans and intentions for bringing about world revolution?

**J.V. STALIN:** We never had such plans and intentions.

**R. HOWARD:** You appreciate, no doubt, Mr. Stalin, that much of the world has long entertained a different impression.

**J.V. STALIN:** This is the product of a misunderstanding.

**R. HOWARD:** A tragic misunderstanding?

**J.V. STALIN:** No, a comical one. Or, perhaps, tragicomic.

You see, we Marxists believe that a revolution will also take place in other countries. But it will take place only when the revolutionaries in those countries think it possible, or necessary. The export of revolution is nonsense. Every country will make its own revolution if it wants to, and if it does not want to, there will be no revolution. For example, our country wanted to make a revolution and made it, and now we are building a new, classless society.

But to assert that we want to make a revolution in other countries, to interfere in their lives, means saying what is untrue, and what we have never advocated.

**R. HOWARD:** At the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., President Roosevelt and Litvinov exchanged identical notes concerning the question of propaganda.

Paragraph four of Litvinov's letter to President Roosevelt said that the Soviet government undertakes "not to permit the formation or residence on its territory of any organization or group –and to prevent the activity on its territory of any organization or group, or of representatives or officials of any organization or group– which has as its aim, the overthrow, or preparation for the overthrow of, or the bringing about by force of a change in the political or social order of the whole or any part of its territories or possessions." Why, Mr. Stalin, did Litvinov sign this letter if compliance with the terms of paragraph four is incompatible with the interests of the Soviet Union or beyond its control?

**J.V. STALIN:** The fulfillment of the obligations contained in the paragraph you have quoted is within our control; we have fulfilled, and will continue to fulfill, these obligations.



According to our constitution, political emigrants have the right to reside on our territory. We provide them with the right of asylum just as the United States gives right of asylum to political emigrants.

It is quite obvious that when Litvinov signed that letter he assumed that the obligations contained in it were mutual. Do you think, Mr. Howard, that the fact that there are on the territory of the U.S.A., Russian white guard emigrants who are carrying on propaganda against the Soviets, and in favor of capitalism, who enjoy the material support of American citizens, and who, in some cases, represent groups of terrorists, is contrary to the terms of the Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement? Evidently these emigrants enjoy the right of asylum, which also exists in the United States. As far as we are concerned, we would never tolerate on our territory a single terrorist, no matter against whom his criminal designs were directed. Evidently the right of asylum is given a wider interpretation in the U.S.A. than in our country. But we are not complaining.

Perhaps you will say that we sympathize with the political emigrants who come on to our territory.

But are there no American citizens who sympathize with the white guard emigrants who carry on propaganda in favor of capitalism and against the Soviets? So what is the point? The point is not to assist these people, not to finance their activities. The point is that official persons in either country must refrain from interfering in the internal life of the other country. Our officials are honestly fulfilling this obligation. If any of them has failed in his duty, let us be informed about it.

If we were to go too far and to demand that all the white guard emigrants be deported from the United States, that would be encroaching on the right of asylum proclaimed both in the U.S.A. and in the U.S.S.R. A reasonable limit to claims and counterclaims must be recognized. Litvinov signed his letter to President Roo-

sevelt, not in a private capacity, but in the capacity of representative of a state, just as President Roosevelt did. Their agreement is an agreement between two states. In signing that agreement both Litvinov and President Roosevelt, as representatives of two states, had in mind the activities of the agents of their states who must not and will not interfere in the internal affairs of the other side. The right of asylum proclaimed in both countries could not be affected by this agreement.

The Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement, as an agreement between the representatives of two states, should be interpreted within these limits.

**R. HOWARD:** Did not Browder and Darcy, the American Communists, appearing before the Seventh Congress of the Communist International last summer, appeal for the overthrow by force of the American government?

**J.V. STALIN:** I confess I do not remember the speeches of Comrades Browder and Darcy; I do not even remember what they spoke about. Perhaps they did say something of the kind. But it was not Soviet people who formed the American Communist Party.

It was formed by Americans. It exists in the U.S.A. legally. It puts up its candidates at elections, including presidential elections. If Comrades Browder and Darcy made speeches in Moscow once, they made hundreds of similar, and certainly stronger speeches at home, in the U.S.A. The American Communists are permitted to advocate their ideas freely, are they not? It would be quite wrong to hold the Soviet government responsible for the activities of American Communists.

**R. HOWARD:** But in this instance, is it not a fact that their activities took place on Soviet soil, contrary to the terms of paragraph four of the agreement between Roosevelt and Litvinov?

**J.V. STALIN:** What are the activities of the Communist Party; in what way can they manifest themselves?

Usually their activities consist in organizing the masses of the workers, in organizing meetings, demonstrations, strikes, etc. It goes without saying that the American Communists cannot do all this on Soviet territory. We have no American workers in the U.S.S.R.

**R. HOWARD:** I take it that the gist of your thought then is that an interpretation can be made which will safeguard and continue good relations between our countries?

**J.V. STALIN:** Yes, absolutely.

**R. HOWARD:** Admittedly communism has not been achieved in Russia. State socialism has been built.

Have not fascism in Italy and National-Socialism in Germany claimed that they have attained similar results? Have not both been achieved at the price of privation and personal liberty, sacrificed for the good of the state?

**J.V. STALIN:** The term "state socialism" is inexact.

Many people take this term to mean the system under which a certain part of wealth, sometimes a fairly considerable part, passes into the hands of the state, or under its control, while in the overwhelming majority of cases the works, factories and the land remain the property of private persons. This is what many people take "state socialism" to mean. Sometimes this term covers a system under which the capitalist state, in order to prepare for, or wage war, runs a certain number of private enterprises at its own expense. The society which we have built cannot possibly be called "state socialism." Our Soviet society is socialist society, because the private ownership of the factories, works, the land, the banks and the transport system has been abolished and public ownership put in its place. The social organiza-

tion which we have created may be called a Soviet socialist organization, not entirely completed, but fundamentally, a socialist organization of society.

The foundation of this society is public property: state, i.e., national, and also co-operative, collective farm property. Neither Italian fascism nor German National-“Socialism” has anything in common with such a society. Primarily, this is because the private ownership of the factories and works, of the land, the banks, transport, etc., has remained intact, and, therefore, capitalism remains in full force in Germany and in Italy.

Yes, you are right, we have not yet built communist society. It is not so easy to build such a society. You are probably aware of the difference between socialist society and communist society. In socialist society certain inequalities in property still exist. But in socialist society there is no longer unemployment, no exploitation, no oppression of nationalities. In socialist society everyone is obliged to work, although he does not, in return for his labor receive according to his requirements, but according to the quantity and quality of the work he has performed. That is why wages, and, moreover, unequal, differentiated wages, still exist. Only when we have succeeded in creating a system under which, in return for their labor, people will receive from society, not according to the quantity and quality of the labor they perform, but according to their requirements, will it be possible to say that we have built communist society.

You say that in order to build our socialist society we sacrificed personal liberty and suffered privation.

Your question suggests that socialist society denies personal liberty. That is not true. Of course, in order to build something new one must economize, accumulate resources, reduce one's consumption for a time and bor-

row from others. If one wants to build a house one saves up money, cuts down consumption for a time, otherwise the house would never be built.

How much more true is this when it is a matter of building a new human society? We had to cut down consumption somewhat for a time, collect the necessary resources and exert great effort. This is exactly what we did and we built a socialist society.

But we did not build this society in order to restrict personal liberty but in order that the human individual may feel really free. We built it for the sake of real personal liberty, liberty without quotation marks. It is difficult for me to imagine what "personal liberty" is enjoyed by an unemployed person, who goes about hungry, and cannot find employment.

Real liberty can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no oppression of some by others, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a man is not haunted by the fear of being tomorrow deprived of work, of home and of bread. Only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible.

**R. HOWARD:** Do you view as compatible the coincidental development of American democracy and the Soviet system?

**J.V. STALIN:** American democracy and the Soviet system may peacefully exist side by side and compete with each other. But one cannot evolve into the other.

The Soviet system will not evolve into American democracy, or vice versa. We can peacefully exist side by side if we do not find fault with each other over every trifling matter.

**R. HOWARD:** A new constitution is being elaborated in the U.S.S.R. providing for a new system of elections. To what degree can this new system alter the situation in the U.S.S.R. since, as formerly, only one party will come forward at elections?

**J.V. STALIN:** We shall probably adopt our new constitution at the end of this year. The commission appointed to draw up the constitution is working and should finish its labors soon. As has been announced already, according to the new constitution, the suffrage will be universal, equal, direct and secret.

You are puzzled by the fact that only one party will come forward at elections. You cannot see how election contests can take place under these conditions. Evidently candidates will be put forward not only by the Communist Party, but by all sorts of public, non-Party organizations. And we have hundreds of these. We have no contending parties any more than we have a capitalist class contending against a working class which is exploited by the capitalists.

Our society consists exclusively of free toilers of town and country - workers, peasants, intellectuals.

Each of these strata may have its special interests and express them by means of the numerous public organizations that exist. But since there are no classes, since the dividing lines between classes have been obliterated, since only a slight, but not a fundamental, difference between various strata in socialist society has remained, there can be no soil for the creation of contending parties. Where there are not several classes there cannot be several parties, for a party is part of a class.

Under National-“Socialism” there is also only one party. But nothing will come of this fascist one party system. The point is that in Germany, capitalism and classes have remained, the class struggle has remained and will force itself to the surface in spite of everything, even in the struggle between parties which represent antagonistic classes, just as it did in Spain, for example. In Italy there is also only one party, the Fascist Party. But nothing will come of it there for the same reasons.

Why will our suffrage be universal? Because all citizens, except those deprived of the franchise by the courts, will have the right to elect and be elected.

Why will our suffrage be equal? Because neither differences in property (which still exist to some extent) nor racial or national affiliation will entail either privilege or disability. Women will enjoy the same rights to elect and be elected as men. Our suffrage will be really equal.

Why secret? Because we want to give Soviet people complete freedom to vote for those they want to elect, for those whom they trust to safeguard their interests.

Why direct? Because direct elections to all representative institutions, right up to the supreme bodies, will best of all safeguard the interests of the toilers of our boundless country. You think that there will be no election contests.

But there will be, and I foresee very lively election campaigns. There are not a few institutions in our country which work badly. Cases occur when this or that local government body fails to satisfy certain of the multifarious and growing requirements of the toilers of town and country. Have you built a good school or not? Have you improved housing conditions?

Are you a bureaucrat? Have you helped to make our labor more effective and our lives more cultured?

Such will be the criteria with which millions of electors will measure the fitness of candidates, reject the unsuitable, expunge their names from candidates' lists, and promote and nominate the best.

Yes, election campaigns will be very lively, they will be conducted around numerous, very acute problems, principally of a practical nature, of first class importance for the people. Our new electoral system will tighten up all institutions and organizations and compel them to improve their work. Universal, direct and secret suffrage in the U.S.S.R. will be a whip in the

hands of the population against the organs of government which work badly. In my opinion our new Soviet constitution will be the most democratic constitution in the world.



