The death of Gustav Wetter, S. J. in Rome on November 5, 1991 went virtually unnoticed in the media. Professor emeritus for Russian and Marxist Philosophy at the Papal Gregorian University, Fr. Wetter, who was born on May 4, 1911 in Mödling in the vicinity of Vienna (lower Austria), relinquished his last scientific post as head of the Centro di Studi Marxisti, at age seventy-nine. His successor, Fr. Bernd Groth, S. J., has taught at the Gregorianum since 1985, specializing not only in Fundamental Theology but directing as well the Delegatio pro rebus russicis founded by the Jesuit order in Rome in November 1985, and is in addition closely involved in computer sciences at the Gregorianum.1 Given his many commitments it was only at the end of January 1992 that Fr. Groth was able to inform me of Fr. Wetter's demise in the sick bay of the Gregorianum. (. . .)

Wetter was fourteen years old when in 1925 he started to learn Russian and turn his attention to the relations between politics and religion in Russia. Upon graduating from the Elisabeth-Gymnasium (Vienna V) in 1930 he entered the Pontificum Collegium Russicum to prepare for priesthood in the service of Russia. He studied from 1930 to 1936 at the Papal Gregorian University where he earned a doctorate in Philosophy and a Licentiate in theology. During the Christmas celebrations in 1935 he was ordained according to the Byzantine-Slavic rite and in September 1936 entered the Jesuit order. After completing a year's novitiate in Zagreb he returned to Rome to enroll in the Papal Oriental Institute where in 1941 he completed a dissertation under Fr. Professor Bernhard Schultzze on the pan-unity metaphysics of the Russian religious philosopher, Lev Karsavin (1882—1952), earning thereby the title of Doctor Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum.

In July 1942 Wetter was conscripted into the Wehrmacht and carried out his service first in the medical corps in Upper Bavaria, later as an interpreter in Munich, and finally as an instructor in the inter-
pretor's school in Berlin. He was released from service in May 1943 due to his affiliation with the Jesuits.

Beginning in the autumn of 1943 Wetter, recently appointed Dozent for the history of Russian Philosophy at the Papal Oriental Institute, began giving lectures on Soviet Marxism. These lectures formed the basis for the Italian edition of his main work on the history and system of dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union. The 431 page book appeared in Torino at the end of 1947 under the auspices of the virtually Communist publisher, Giulio Einaudi. Some four years later the first German edition was published by Herder in Vienna, having grown by two hundred pages. The fourth revised and extended edition appeared in Vienna and Freiburg/Brsg. in 1958 to be followed in 1960 by the fifth German edition. From 1947 to 1949 Wetter was vice-Rector and thereafter, until 1954, Rector of the Collegium Russicum. At the same time, he started lecturing at the Gregorianum on Russian and Marxist Philosophy. In 1957 he was promoted to the post of ‘ordinary’ professor at the Oriental Institute where he had hitherto held the position of ‘extra-ordinary’ professor. In 1970, he was appointed professor at the Gregorianum and established there the Center for Marxist Studies while continuing his teaching at the Oriental Institute as guest professor. Although he retired officially in 1981, he continued to lecture on a reduced scale to the age of 73 (1984) and directed the Center for Marxist Studies until March, 1990.

Wetter had hoped that upon completing his training in the Collegium Russicum he would be able to satisfy his pastoral ambition of becoming a worker-priest in Russia. In reality, however, matters took an altogether different course. What followed instead was a scholarly existence replete with successes in the critical investigation and teaching of Russian and Marxist philosophy as well as Sovietology. On July 4, 1990 he wrote that now, finally, Day X of the entry of Roman Catholic priests into Russia was at hand. “I myself can no longer be of use in Russia, because I am too old and too weak. Yet the good Lord reserved for me another form of service to Russia: by my writings I was able to contribute essentially to the arrival of Day X. I am like Moses on mount Nebo: he led the people of God to the promised Land, but could not enter into it with them.”

With his main work on dialectical materialism Gustav Wetter was