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Marxism and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat
2003

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This is an article by the Alliance of Revolutionary Socialists, a Russian libertarian communist group. A critical analysis of Marxism as a revolutionary ideology, and its role in history and in the contemporary workers' movement. **Written by Marlen Insarov, a member of the ARS and a famous Russian-Ukrainian theoretician, translated by Vasiliy Bazhanskiy, another member of the ARS, and kindly edited by Elizabeth, an American left libertarian comrade.**

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The classical social-democratic and “communist” movements are gone. The crisis of humanity is reduced to the proletarian crisis. This class is currently in the worst state in its history, having been reduced to an army of totally defenseless and mercilessly exploited wage slaves. The duty of revolutionaries is therefore to understand this historical crisis and its causes instead of reciting old Trotskyite mantras.

It's also useful to understand the extent to which the old proletariat of the social-democratic and communist parties was socialist, and what Marxism meant in the context those ideologies.

Ten Theses on Marxism Today (Karl Korsch, 1950):

1. It no longer makes sense to ask to what extent the teaching of Marx and Engels is, today, theoretically acceptable and practically applicable.
2. Today, all attempts to re-establish the Marxist doctrine as a whole in its original function as a

theory of the working classes social revolution are reactionary utopias.

3. Though basically ambiguous, there are, however, important aspects of Marxian teaching which in their changing function and applying to different locations have until today retained their effectiveness. Also, the impetus generated by the praxis of the old Marxist labour movement has been presently incorporated into the practical struggles of peoples – and classes.
4. The first step in re-establishing a revolutionary theory and practice consists in breaking with that Marxism which claims to monopolize revolutionary initiative as well as theoretical and practical direction.
5. Marx is today only one among the numerous precursors, founders and developers of the socialist movement of the working class. No less important are the so-called Utopian Socialists from Thomas More to the present. No less important are the great rivals of Marx, such as Blanqui, and his sworn enemies, such as Proudhon and Bakunin. No less important, in the final result, are the more recent developments such as German revisionism, French syndicalism, and Russian Bolshevism.
6. The following points are particularly critical for Marxism: (a) its dependence on the underdeveloped economic and political conditions in Germany and all the other countries of central and eastern Europe where it was to have political relevance; (b) its unconditional

adherence to the political forms of the bourgeois revolution; (c) the unconditional acceptance of the advanced economic conditions of England as a model for the future development of all countries and as objective preconditions for the transition to socialism; to which one should add, (d) the consequences of its repeated desperate and contradictory attempts to break out of these conditions.

7. The results of these conditions are: (a) the over-estimation of the state as the decisive instrument of social revolution; (b) the mystical identification of the development of the capitalist economy with the social revolution of the working class; (c) the subsequent ambiguous development of this first form of the Marxian theory of revolution by the artificial grafting onto it of a theory of the communist revolution in two phases; this theory, directed on the one hand against Blanqui, and on the other against Bakunin, whisks away from the present movement the real emancipation of the working class and puts it back into the indefinite future.
8. This is the point for insertion of the Leninist or Bolshevik development; and it is in this new form that Marxism has been transferred to Russia and Asia. Thereby Marxism has been changed; from a revolutionary theory it has become an ideology. This ideology could be and has been used for a variety of different goals.
9. It is from this viewpoint that one comes to judge in a critical spirit the two Russian revolutions of 1917 and 1928, and it is from this viewpoint

that one must determine the functions fulfilled by Marxism today in Asia and on a world scale.

10. The control of the workers over the production of their own lives will not come from their occupying the positions, on the international and world markets, abandoned by the self-destroying and so-called free competition of the monopolistic owners of the means of production. This control can only result from a planned intervention by all the classes today excluded from it into a production which today is already tending in every way to be regulated in a monopolistic and planned fashion.

The above theses would likely shock all those who consider Marxism and the workers' movement as synonyms. The shock is also likely to be amplified by the concentrated thesis form of expression, whereby thoughts are directly affirmed without long-winded proofs and thus remain unelaborated and obscure in places. Without accepting the full package of ideas of the "ten theses", we nevertheless still find them extremely useful for stimulating critical efforts of re-evaluating the proletarian revolutionary experience.

The world is currently experiencing a kind of timelessness, in which the old is gone and the new has yet to arrive. For a revolutionary, there is nothing worse than living in such a time. But there still remains some work that must be done after dusk and before dawn; when ghouls roam and Minerva's owl takes flight. This work is about drawing conclusions from the past, and this is exactly the work done for his time by Karl Marx in the 1840's, when he summed up the French revolutionary epoch and put a cross on

maximalists, Bakunin's Anarchism, Sorel's syndicalism, and Machajsky's proletarianism bear no less importance for the emerging workers' movement. It will also gain inspiration from all past fighters of emancipation, including fighters of peasant wars, plebeian heresies, levelling communism, left communism and proletarian Anarchism.

7. Emerging automated productive forces make the collectivist revolution a material possibility, and the impending apocalypse of humanity in case of prolonged capitalism make in a necessity.
8. This revolution will be the most radical and merciless of all, with radicalism and mercilessness central to both its ends and means.
9. This revolution will totally annihilate the system of capitalist production, thus erasing the division of labour, commodity production, the trio the state, nation and family, religion, philosophy and the bourgeois sciences.
10. Potential revolutionaries must subjectively prepare for this revolution by abandoning outdated ideological schemes and unifying revolutionary thought with revolutionary action.

the concluded Bourgeois revolution in the West. This is the same work that must be done today, a new era in which repeating old mantras is equivalent to repeating the 1790's ideas of Rousseau and Robespierre in the 1840's; it is brave thought that determines brave action, but doesn't substitute it.

It's also useful to understand the extent to which the old proletariat of the social-democratic and communist parties was socialist and what Marxism meant in the context of being their ideologies. Korsch's theses, being free from diplomatic loopholes and double-speak, can be a solid starting point for analysis of ideas they represent.

However, since the history of revolutionary movement and ideas is regrettably terra incognita for the majority of today's left, it's appropriate to delve into Korsch's own background.

Karl Korsch (1886 – 1961) was born into the family of a German bank clerk, and was educated in law, economics and philosophy. His education included a period of life in London from 1912 to 1914, where he became involved in the Fabian society and other movements of English reformism.

With the advent of First World War militarism, Korsch shifted away from reformism and arrived at revolutionary socialism. In 1917 he joined the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, and in 1920, together with the majority of USPD, he joined the ranks of the Communist Party of Germany.

In 1923 Korsch saw his most celebrated and controversial work titled "Marxism and Philosophy" published. In the same year he became the Minister of Justice in the regional social-democratic and communist Thuringian government while arming workers' militias for a foiled proletarian uprising.

After the revolution in Germany was defeated in 1923, Korsch supported the radical left wing of the KPD, at the time led by A.

Maslov and R. Fisher while editing the “International” Party’s theoretical journal.

In the aftermath of the 1926 KPD split, Korsch led one of the new dissenter groups called “The Decisive Left,” from the tribune of which he outspokenly criticised USSR’s state capitalism and the October Revolution, over the bourgeois nature of which he was becoming ever more assured. On the international scene he made attempts at organising a united radical left front, which brought him into contact with the Italian radical left at the time inspired by Bordiga.

In 1928, after the “The Decisive Left” ceased to function, Korsch became preoccupied with Marxist propaganda in secret worker and intelligentsia study groups, where he educated Bertolt Brecht in Marxist theory.

Following the rise of Nazism in Germany, Korsch immigrated to Denmark, and in 1936 left Europe for the USA. In the States he taught philosophy while becoming involved with small groups of “Council-Communists” of Paul Mattick and his comrades.

When the Spanish revolution erupted, Korsch sympathised with the anarcho – syndicalist CNT, but criticised its leadership’s opportunism. When the subsequent World War 2 swept across Europe, he recognised the imperialist nature of all sides of the conflict. But throughout the war and beyond, his overwhelming interest became the 30’s and Marxism as the revolutionary proletarian movement’s theoretical weapon – which gave rise to some of his best works such as “Karl Marx,” and the “Three Essays” literary cycle including “Leading Principles of Marxism: a Restatement” and “Why I am a Marxist.”

Despite being gradually isolated throughout his life, Korsch hadn’t succumbed to self-delusion and remained loyal to the emancipation of the proletariat until his death in 1961. He sold out to neither Stalinism nor Social Democracy, unlike the countless Marxist intellectuals of that era who started out so well and ended up on the opposite side of the barricades. He thus remained firmly

parts of Marxism, which made it a counterrevolutionary force in relation to the proletarian revolution, and which must be discarded by the emerging revolutionary workers’ movement.

5. Paralysis of the workers’ movement’s leftist factions was induced by the counterrevolutionary functions of the dominating Marxist ideology. This came to be the subjective reason for the revolutionary movements’ defeat between 1917 and 1936, reflecting the objective inability of the industrial proletariat to organise a collectivist society. The great exception was the October revolution, led by the Bolsheviks who, in an alliance with the left Social Revolutionaries, the maximalists and the Anarchists, were closer to revolutionary communism than the rest of the Second International, despite their many obvious errors. Still, the industrial proletariat’s incapability of self-organisation on collectivist basis precluded the October revolution from developing into a global collectivist revolution, which remained a bourgeois revolution, albeit a radical one.
6. The above theses do not dismiss the enormous courage of the millions of proletarian fighters who fought and died under the banner of Marxism, nor do they dismiss the importance of the ideas of Marx and Engels, nor of their celebrated students, Bogdanov, Lenin, Trotskiy, Bordiga, and others, to the workers’ movement theory. However, the revolutionary communism of Babeuf, Blanqui and Tkachev, the revolutionary Narodniks, the left Social Revolutionaries and

Ten Theses on Marxism Today (2003)

1. Marxism, as an ideological doctrine of the reformist workers' movement, is theoretically unsound and practically counterrevolutionary in the modern era of totalitarian capitalism.
2. Marxism is not the historical materialist theory, as discovered by Marx that still retains its scientific and revolutionary importance. Marxism is the ideological backdrop of the reformist workers' movement, as devised by Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and Kautskiy, among others, to counter enemies from both the right (Lasallianism, Proudhonism), and the left (Blanquism, Bakuninism, Narodniks), and later adopted by evolved movements, such as Stalinism and Trotskyism.
3. Marxism was characterised by the following attributes that made it antagonistic to revolutionary proletarian communism: a) bourgeois progressivism, as substituted for revolutionary catastrophism, and linked with a distant revolution; b) a coexistence of revolutionary propaganda and the limited reformist reality; c) the reduction of workers' struggle to the struggle for bourgeois revolution, bourgeois reforms, and for bettering and improving capitalism as inevitable in the era of progressive capitalism, as opposed to its destruction – and the resulting support for bourgeois nationalist movements and coalitions with the progressive bourgeoisie.
4. Democracy, parliamentarianism, legalism, propaganda and effective patriotism were integral

entrenched in the positions of Dutch-German left Communism and shared both its strengths and weaknesses.

In the previously mentioned Korsch's work of "Marxism and philosophy", he undertakes a profound study of Marxism through Marxist analysis, dividing its history into 3 stages: 1) The catastrophic ultra radical Marxism of the 1840s embodied in the "Communist Manifesto"; 2) The evolutionary progressive Marxism that occupied the next phase of capitalism until 1914; 3) The newly restored radical Marxism of post-1914, reflecting the resurgent catastrophic revolution.

As we now know, the third stage of the 1914–1945 revolutionary epoch did not bury capitalism, and the forces that preserved it were those that claimed to be its gravediggers – the Social-Democratic and Communist parties. What followed was a period of capitalist progress tolerated by a crushed proletariat. Therefore, Korsch's historical scope of Marxism must be extended and its structure developed.

Marx was not the inventor of proletarian class struggle; rather, proletarian class struggle turned the academic philosopher and the radical bourgeois democrat into a communist. But of what proletarians are we speaking? The Marxist historical conception points to the concentration and centralisation of production in due course of capitalist development, and to the respective power, organisation and quantity of the proletariat. In this model, as capitalism develops, so does the industrial proletariat and its revolutionary movement.

The above Marxist apologia for capitalism has one flaw; it has been shown false. If one were to formulate a universal law, save

for a number of exceptions, the opposite trend to the Marxist prediction is visible. The further capitalist development takes us, the further it fragments the proletariat and the more it weakens its revolutionary movement. The 20th century proletariat has significantly underperformed in its revolutionary achievements with respect to its 19th century counterpart. Twentieth century France knew no fierce attempts at forging a workers' state, such as the two Paris Communes of 1793 and 1871, nor did it know armed proletarian insurrections, such as Lion textile workers uprising of 1831 and 1834 and the June 1848 in Paris.

Looking back at the history of the workers' movement, it is evident that the most organic revolutionary movements such as 1) craftsmen forced into a proletarian position by the forces of developing capitalism (the Luddites, the Lion workers, the Communards), or 2) newly urbanised peasants who still retained the collectivist traditions of agrarian society (Chartists, Russian Soviets, Spanish syndicalists).

The reasons are self-evident. Urbanised peasants and artisans still retained personal control over the production process, and could easily imagine a similar arrangement on a new technological basis once the producers expropriate the capitalists' machinery. The capitalist system was anything but stable and "natural" for these people. They saw what preceded it, and could see through it just as easily. The capitalist enterprises were not a part of them in any way; instead they were forced into them by violence, barely concealed, and often quite overt. They consequently longed to destroy them with equal violence.

Their direct enemy, the new class of capitalists, handed them the necessary political and ideological weapons to be used against itself. In a quest to gain a loyal army from the plebeian masses that could be used against the parasitic aristocracy and the absolutist bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie politicised the masses while providing a range of revolutionary ideological arguments to the masses in an outfall from its ideological battles with monarchy and traditional

proto-exploiters. The longer they retained control over collective property, the more this property lost its collective character and became the property of the exploiters who then organised into the state, with control over state property. State property was thus the primordial form of exploiter property. Only in the course of following millennia did private property, or the second form of exploiter property, slowly begin to emerge.

Material relations are not legal property relations; they are real human interaction in the process of production. Property relations are simply formal expressions of real managerial relations, or power relations, and property itself is a form of economic power. Collectivist – communist – society is a society without the division of humans into the managers and the managed, or the rulers and the ruled.

The exploiter class is formed, in various proportions under different conditions, from a state and a private group of exploiters that are constantly in conflict over their share of surplus value between themselves and the producing class. Bureaucracy is not a class neutral group of people; it is an integral part of the exploiter class that in some cases, as in the Inca Empire or in the Soviet Union, constitutes the entire exploiter class.

All this solidifies the historical materialist theory that views society as a system of production and the division of labour. The identity of this view with that of Marx and Engels is evidenced by "The German Ideology", and Bogdanov's work shows that they were not alone in their view.

On the other hand, official Soviet textbooks on "Marxist philosophy" are everything but identifiable with historical materialism. Hence calling historical materialism by the name of "Marxism-Leninism" is as inappropriate as calling modern physics by the name of "Newtonism-Einsteinism."

Engels' characterising of Saint-Simon, who "was along with Hegel, a universal thinker of his time, but was limited in his own knowledge, and in the knowledge of his time," is fully applicable to Marx and Engels themselves. They were too limited by their experience and by the level of historical knowledge of their time.

Throughout the lifetime of Marx and Engels, the only history to be at least partially studied was the history of Western Europe. This predictably led to a flawed generalisation of West European specifics into the rest of the world. Since the individual form of exploitation had long established itself in Europe, the form's specifics were elevated into the status of universal laws, which guided formal Marxism and precluded it from engagement with many past and future events.

Rousseau's theory that postulated the emergence of classes as preceding the emergence of states was transplanted into Marx's theory. Exploiter property was equated to private property, which is only one of its variants. Certain formulations about Bonapartism by Marx and Engels implied that the state can take be dissected from social classes. This gave rise to a Marxist tenet of the state apparatus existing apart from the exploiter class, as a class impartial organisation.

Twentieth century historical science achieved substantial progress in studying pre-capitalist societies. Meanwhile, the Stalinist and state-capitalist experience demonstrated that the political economy of laissez-faire 19th century Britain is hardly a role, but was, in fact, merely a short-lived episode.

Changes of productive forces and the consequent complications of the productive process, the division of labour and the production of surplus, rather than changes in consumption and distribution conditioned the emergence of exploitation and civilisation. Complications of the production process in turn gave rise to a new social class of professional managers that organised this process. The previously elected, recallable and scrutinised chiefs became an increasingly authoritarian and privileged group in society, or the

hierarchy. The bourgeois declarations against despots, tyrants and privileged parasites were taken up by the masses and used against the new moneyed aristocracy and "industrial feudals," as Fourier labeled the capitalists.

The "inalienable rights of man" implied that the foremost right is the right to life, and the contradiction between private property and this right was self-evident to the masses. Having overthrown the old rulers in the tide of bourgeois revolution, the plebeian masses now took their aim at the new rulers and sought to take the revolution to a new level, and embark on a new, greater revolution against the bourgeoisie. Ideological expressions of these currents surfaced in various strands of proletarian communism.

Beneath the general label of "utopian socialism" there lie two separate strands of pre-Marxian social thought: 1) The criticism of capitalism by its own reformers who often weren't even socialists (such as Fourier and Saint-Simon, who were nevertheless great thinkers on par with Hegel), and 2) Proletarian currents that saw the emancipation of the proletariat as the task of the proletariat itself, and advocated a revolutionary overthrow if the established order. This strand includes revolutionary communism, and the violent proletarian dictatorship of Babeuf, Blanqui and Weitling. It also includes the left wing of Chartism, revolutionary Anarchism, and Bakunin's wing of the First International, as well as the Chicago Anarchists, and Russian revolutionary Narodniks, with similar currents in south and east Europe.

In the majority of cases proletarian communism was grounded in natural rights (with some attempts at historical justification – such as by some Chartists (Bronterre O'Brien, for example) and by the great Italian revolutionary Carlo Pisacane, who combined a personalised form of historical materialism with Anarchism and Narodnik populism. Yet this crude ideology far exceeded subse-

quent Marxism and the Second International in revolutionary consistency.

Worker intellectual Karl Schapper, clockmaker Joseph Moll, cobbler Heinrich Bauer – all these were new friends of the young Engels in the mid 1840s. These acquaintances evidently left quite an impression, as 50 years on he was remembering these real men, met at a time when he was only aspiring to become like them. Schapper, Moll and Bauer were all members of the League of the Just – an organisation uniting migrant German apprentices in England, France and Switzerland. A few hundred exiles (who were at first titled accordingly – The League of the Exiles – and eventually ended up as The Communist League) persecuted by either German despots or hunger and need (mostly by both) possessed nothing of value, and thus had no Fatherland. The suffering of the world was their suffering; they had no home and their home was everywhere.

Revolutionary Marxism of the 1840s was the ideology of travelling apprentices and first-generation industrial workers (qualified and settled factory workers had not appeared yet). The League of the Just, Ricardian Socialists (who were proletarian thinkers with socialist ideas inspired by Ricardo), “Physical Force” Chartists and revolutionary communist societies in France provided the communist content, while Marx and Engels provided the historic and scientific framework – no more, and no less, of course. Bourgeois intellectuals, disciples of Hegel, former radical democrats – they all did what they could and expecting anything more would be idealistic.

Vigorous appraisal of certain travelling apprentices by Marx and Engels was mixed with a certain disdain towards the class as a whole. Radical bourgeois democrats, who were to become historical materialists, at first gravitated towards the proletariat in which they saw a class able to fulfill the tasks of the imminent bourgeois revolution, not its own revolution.

But efforts to elaborate and refine the laws of dialectics are idle distractions from class struggle, as is all of philosophy.

A communist society would tend to unify philosophy, the natural and the social sciences into a universal science, but any current attempts at such unification are evidently premature, as Bogdanov’s failed attempt had demonstrated – despite his being the sole student of Marx who exceeded his teacher. As the great bourgeois revolutionary Mao laconically put it, “First we conquer the earth; the universe will come after.”

Engels correctly summed up Marx’s greatest scientific contributions in his funerary speech, where he mentioned the theory of historical materialism and its application to capitalist society, demonstrating the latter’s inevitable demise. These great achievements retain their importance to this day. Yet it must be reiterated that Marx could never have devised a rigid social science in its totality; he simply laid its foundations. Just as physics did not stall at Galileo or Newton, or as biology is not limited to Linnaeus and Darwin, so historical materialism cannot survive without developing.

The fact of exploitation is evident to every worker, and this fact was already beginning to be explained by the socialist Ricardians. Further debates amongst the Marxist economists over which economic prerequisites are most likely to fatally undermine capitalism – be it the tendency of profit rates to fall, the drying up of new markets, or the above alongside the necessary revolutionary political action – prove that Marx’s economic theory exists as a method of understanding capitalism with the purpose of its destruction, rather than a frozen dogma.

The historic materialist theory must be understood in two lights, one being the light of initial discovery by Marx and Engels, and the second being the light of its interpretation and application by them, with both of the latter being very vulnerable to flaws.

Revolutionary communism, the communism of Babeuf, Blanqui and Tkachev to no lesser degree than the communism of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Bordiga, will again resurface.

The resurgent workers' movement will certainly absorb many ideas formulated by Marx and Engels, as well as their famed students such as Bogdanov, Lenin, Trotskiy and Bordiga. On the other hand, "Marxism" as the ideological scheme of social democratic reformism, which includes both Stalinism and Trotskyism as its variants, must be targeted by robust criticism and then rejected as a bourgeois ideology that inoculates the proletariat with ideas such as bourgeois progressivism, evolutionism, pacifism, legalism and parliamentarianism. Debates of the "true Scotsman" nature over various strands of "Marxism" are nothing but demagoguery, where any citation can be countered by another one, *ad infinitum*. We must move on, with Marx as a teacher, but one of many, as the best student is the one that goes beyond his teacher instead of sitting on his grave.

In conclusion, let us analyse Marx's theory for elements useful to us.

The Implications of Dialectical Materialism

The world view of dialectic materialism as expressed in 'Anti-Dühring' and later developed in further works by Engels, as well as in the works of Plekhanov and Kautsky, was not Marx's discovery. When the young Marx and Engels were preoccupied with philosophy, they were not yet communists, and when they became communists, they discarded philosophy as an idle bourgeois occupation. 'Anti-Dühring' was produced later, with politics and polemic in mind. Philosophically, it is Engels' polemic against Dühring's effort of constructing a "global scheme", which, ironically, Engels' own ideas were turned into by "Marxist-Leninist" philosophy.

The focus of dialectic materialism lies in viewing the world as a progressing, self-sufficient whole, an inherent part of which is class struggle. It must also be remembered that Bakunin and Dietzgen stuck to this worldview at least as consistently as Engels.

Thus, bourgeois progressivism was an inherent part of the worldview of Marx and Engels, which is evidenced by their consistent position on the national question. It was unlikely to be otherwise.

Both the peasant and the artisan had control over the production process, but this process was extremely limited in scale, both in productivity and geography. Common solidarity was forged strong bonds, but didn't extend beyond one peasant common. The peasant, the artisan and the apprentice revolted multiple times against their lords, and could even seize power (such predecessors of proletarian dictatorship crop up throughout history – Florence in 1378, Munster in 1534–1535 and so on), but could never extend this power over society, paving the way to brutal reaction.

Marx and Engels, among their contemporaries, laid hopes on capitalist progress to extend traditional solidarity across the whole of society and to unite not just a peasant common or tanners, joiners and brewers of Parisian quarters, but the global proletariat as a class for itself. The fault of Marx and Engels is then not in painting capitalism in excessively dark colours and in constructing excessive criticism, but in painting it in excessively bright colours, and in constructing excessive apologia.

Owing to its inability to organise on the scale of the entire society, the early proletariat was capable of struggle, but incapable of victory. A permanent revolution – from bourgeois to proletarian was thus impossible in Western Europe. Reformist Marxism of evolutionary capitalist progress era dislodged revolutionary Marxism. In his work "Marxism and Philosophy," Korsch diagnoses this mutation to have taken place in the aftermath of the failed 1848–1849 revolutions. However, it seems more logical to diagnose the

beginning of the mutation to have taken place at that time, and to diagnose its conclusion to have taken place in the 1870s with the defeat of the Paris Commune, the collapse of the First International, the failure of the 1868–1873 Spanish revolution and the Italian anarchist uprisings.

The evolutionary progressive character of capitalism indicated that capitalism, after outliving the revolutionary fight against the defeated feudal reaction and after becoming fully geared towards suppressing any autonomous revolutionary initiative within the proletariat, was now prepared for concessions to the workers – provided they vocally demand them. The historical cycle turned its direction from the revolutionary phase to a reformist phase, but had yet to reach the reactionary one.

As in the evolution of all class societies, the blood, sweat and tears of the proletariat – as well as of the petit bourgeoisie and the colonised peoples – brought progress. Industrialisation eliminated any control over the production process the workers had, turning them into a cog in the machine – something that was brought to its logical conclusion well into the 20th century by Fordism.

Having lost control over their labour, and having become mutually replaceable by mechanical instruments, workers lost confidence in their ability to control the social production process. The will to alter productive relations was lost, leaving only the will to alter distributive relations. It's simple to organise workers' control over an average workshop, but much harder to do the same in a gigantic factory. Artisan Luddites and Chinese peasants of the '20s urban influx could “smash the plant”, but a worker whose father and grandfather laboured in the same factory as him could never contemplate such an act.

The remoulding of the early proletarian revolutionary movement into a reformist movement of a stable proletariat was a remoulding of both the means and the ends. Conspiracies and armed revolts gave way to elections, legal demonstrations, newspaper propaganda and other means for the ends consensually

pable of undertaking a revolution, yet objectively unable to secure a historical victory.

Despite the dawning historical possibility of a victorious revolution, it has become tremendously more difficult for the proletariat to initiate it. The forces of reaction and conservatism that accumulated throughout the long centuries of capitalist domination possess enough resources to perpetuate the proletariat in an oppressed, inert and passive state. Only tremendous catastrophes can dislodge it from inactivity and propel it towards a fight for its power.

The scope of such a catastrophe can be reduced to a world war – or perhaps rapid financial meltdowns engineered by the global bourgeoisie, such as the Argentine default in 2001 that sparked a revolution. War emits weapons into mass circulation among the proletariat, and through its horrors and atrocities gradually alleviates the fear of death from the peoples' consciousness. This leaves the proletariat with two choices; to either die for capital, or to die for freedom.

Throughout the whole course of the '90s and the '00s, the scene was being set for a future imperialist conflict. The superpower parity of 1945–1989 is firmly in the past, and the world has entered a new era of wars and revolutions.

Modern capitalist states have totally abandoned their former methods of control through a combination of concessions and reformist organisations, shifting to methods of direct oligarchic dictatorship over atomised and suppressed proletarian masses. Yet every force caused an equal and opposite reaction, and proletarian struggle, free from reformist shackles, will take on the form of quasi-insurrection, not unlike the struggles of 1789–1936. This has already been witnessed in Albania (1997) and Argentina (2001).

sequently looks more like the capitalism of 1800 or 1850 than the capitalism of 1900 or 1950. This is tirelessly bemoaned by surviving honest reformists: “Trade unions traditionally represented the interests of wage labourers in a struggle for higher pay or better working conditions as well as shaping conflict into a civilised form, making social partnership possible. Globalisation weakened trade unions. Paradoxically, this will lead to harsher social conflicts in the future, to more violence from both sides and to more crime” (Kagarlitskiy, B. 2000 “Is there an alternative to neoliberalism?” Alternatives, №1)

An increasing part of the proletariat, having lost the protection of both welfare provision and trade unions, is exposed to hyper exploitation by capital. An increasing number of workers have nothing to rely on in their struggle for class and individual interests aside from their own strength. An increasing share of the working class is composed of migrant workers, those who, just like the travelling artisans from the Communist League, are rejected by their homeland and are not treated as equal citizens by the country that exploits them. They have no other hope than a global a total revolution that will liquidate all borders and nations.

Traditional collectivist societies are still partly intact in various Eastern countries that underwent capitalist modernisation during the 20th century. Western countries completely lack them. However, the contemporary world bears a clear distinction from the past in the form of revolutionised productive forces that for the first time in history offer the possibility of abolishing the division of labour, and therefore class divisions.

Meanwhile, the objective possibility of a successful collectivist revolution and the subjective capability of the proletariat of undertaking it are inverted in their relationship compared to the era between 1789 to 1936, whereby the proletariat was subjectively ca-

fulfilled reformist demands. This was of course draped in heroic revolutionary mythology inherited from earlier generations about a revolution that will eventually arrive through objective factors with no special effort on the part of the workers.

Instead of socialism as a new social formation, socialism as an improved existing formation prevailed in the popular imagination, with a benevolent democratic state controlling land and factories; the new dominant idea among the ranks of social democrats was that of a society as one gigantic factory.

This mutation was so rapid and deep that it managed to permeate all layers of the workers’ movement. Errico Malatesta, one of the greatest anarchists of the early 20th century, was nostalgically reminiscing of his youth, when 30 years prior all his comrades possessed pistols and city maps with potential barricade locations marked on them, while no one concerned themselves over such things anymore... Malatesta lived into the ‘30s, but as we know, drifted far away from his Bakuninite youth.

While at different levels the transformation permeated the workers’ movement in its entirety, Marxism remained the most suitable ideology for it. This can be explained by two related reasons: 1) Marxism gave a grand narrative; 2) Marxism synthesised theoretical radicalism and a legitimisation of future revolution with a legitimisation of present reformist practice.

Korsch and other leftist critics of the Second International’s conclusions from Marxism focused on their fatalism and vulgar determinism, but things are not so simple.

A line must be drawn between a philosophical system, which we can proudly call “historic fatalism,” and its possible psychological and political applications. The two sides can be at odds with each other, with false conclusions conditioned by psychological and po-

litical misunderstandings of the determinist concept itself. Philosophy is a weapon in class struggle, and is a double-edged sword.

Contrary to vulgar conceptions, an absolute system of fatalism and determinism does not deprive struggling people of freedom and activity, but in fact endows these people with great strength. This system renders the traditional eclectic segregation of objective and subjective factors obsolete, combining the two into one single historical process. This process is not split into a chaotic myriad of subjective decisions with a kingdom of eternal laws channeling it, with free individuals choosing whether to obey them or not.

“History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends,” however these ends are not random desires, but are determined by the entirety of previous history. The laws of history are nothing but abstract schemes of human activity, and these laws structure the activity itself. While this approach does make the concept of a “free subject” redundant and demonstrates its illusion, it far from restricts struggle – it in fact fuels it with great energy. If the aims of our struggle are an expression of a historical necessity, and not of a subjective quirk, then our will to action rests on a relentless progress of history instead of relying on individual capacities. The freest men in history are those that express the great revolutionary currents of their time, be it absolute fatalists or absolute determinists – Islamic conquerors of the 7th century, 17th century Puritans, or Bolsheviks of the early 20th century.

It is, however, all too easy to flip the emancipating fatalist philosophy on its backside; all it takes is for individuals to seek an ideologically sound retreat from struggle. It’s easy to “forget” that the laws of history are the laws of human activity, and to ascribe them to some supernatural force that is mystically capable of fulfilling itself with no effort on behalf of humans, or even contrary to the efforts of those contemplating such developments yet acting against them out of personal pragmatism. The peak of such inversion was reached by a certain provocateur, who wrote the following repentance to Maxim Gorkiy in the wake of the October

In Europe, the new era was marked by annihilation of all autonomous workers’ class initiatives by both fascism and antifascism. Automation predictably led to ever-greater submission to the capitalist system. Social democratic and “communist” control over the proletariat forced class struggle into a tamed form that could be tolerated by the bourgeoisie. Wildcat methods of struggle at the primary level also remained at a level tolerable to the bourgeoisie, and were a far cry from struggle for power. A number of small leftist groups that survived from the previous revolutionary era were preoccupied with pure propaganda, and could at best serve to transfer the wisdom gained in the past to upcoming generations. The historical significance of the ‘60s and ‘70s revolutionary movements, and the extent to which they may indicate a revolution brewing beneath the surface of capitalism, is yet to be revealed.

The ‘80s completed the full cycle that began in 1917. The workers’ retreat that kicked off with the Red Army’s defeat at Warsaw reached a limit. Free competition (read: monopolies) has triumphed in the economy, lightly disguised militarist conservatism came to dominate politics, and the last vestiges of class compromise were eroded by neoliberal police states.

It was at this time that the social democrats and “communists” had yet again revealed their true class essence. If in the era of the Welfare State they denounced revolution and came to be reformists, they now proceeded to denounce even reformism, and the New Left outperformed all militarist conservatives in neoliberal savagery. Be it Thatcher or Blair, Putin or Zuzanov; be it a strong state with a market economy, or be it a market economy with a strong state – the differences are elusive.

Declining reformist parties, i.e. their metamorphosis into a liberal-conservative or conservative-liberal clique, went nicely alongside declining trade union power. Modern capitalism con-

strating the unity between subjective responsibility and objective inevitability.

At a decisive moment, the leaders of Spanish Anarchism brilliantly demonstrated that their position was to the right, not to the left, of Bolshevism, and thus stripped themselves of their revolutionary value, revealing their meekly moderate social democratic centrism. They shied away from realising their own “libertarian communist” programme, as this was deemed unfeasible without, in the words of one of the leaders, an “authoritarian Anarchists’ dictatorship.”

Refusing to seize power meant only recognising the existing bourgeois power of the Popular Front. In a bid to escape the Bolshevik fate of becoming tomorrow’s reactionaries, the CNT-FAI leaders became collaborators of current reactionaries. Refusing to construct an “authoritarian Anarchists’ dictatorship,” the Anarchists opened the floodgates to overwhelm Spain with a series of “authoritarian dictatorships” perpetrated by the Stalinists, the Republicans and, finally, Franco.

The Anarchist leaders’ actions were channelled by their existence in the objective social conditions of workers’ bureaucrats, the same bureaucrats that controlled social democratic and “communist” organisations. The logic of history played out regardless of ideological labels.

The Spanish revolution of 1936–1937 was the concluding episode of the interwar revolutionary proletarian movement. The Second World War was followed by victorious agrarian bourgeois revolutions in Albania and Yugoslavia, then by a lost agrarian revolution in Greece, and finally by state capitalist modernisation from above across Eastern Europe. A greater historic significance of the post-war era is the cycle of bourgeois revolutions across the European colonies. However, due to its weakness, the proletariat of Asia and Africa played a much smaller role in them than their predecessors did in Russia and perhaps even in France.

Revolution: “When I betrayed the revolution, I knew that I behaved like a real bastard. I did, however, understand that the revolution is inevitable despite all my efforts against it... I therefore continued my ignoble deeds.”

A philosophising provocateur is certainly an extreme case, but analogous philosophical ideas reigned supreme within all of social democracy. Its action was geared towards reformism, and a future revolution was expected to arrive by itself out of the sheer automatism of historical laws. As a result, the left wing of social democracy, while endorsing revolution in theory, was still unable to cope with revolutionary struggle when the time finally came in 1917–1923 after chaotic capitalist forces put the world through a global massacre and awakened the proletariat into action. The struggle was lost.

It is imperative to note that “Marxism” as an ideological system that was first formulated by such ideologists of social-democracy as Marx, Engels and Kautskiy, are far from identical to Marx’s theory (and also Engels’s – Marx and Engels, despite various differences in the interpretations of certain theoretical questions, have always occupied similar political positions, and deliberations over their differences belong to the realm of intellectual masturbation). Marx’s theory has far more depth, vitality and significance than does “Marxism.”

A whole host of Marxism’s cornerstone postulates directly contradict Marx’s ideas. For example, it substituted legal property relations for real productive relations, and the nationalisation of private property for its elimination, while Marx, in “The Poverty of Philosophy,” has beautifully demonstrated that legal relations are nothing more than a twisted representation of real productive relations. Furthermore, both Marx and Engels have shown a direct link

between the elimination of private property and the elimination of the division of labour in “The German Ideology.”

However, it was “Marxism” that gained political momentum, and was formed as an ideological and political force in opposition to various strands of “utopian socialism” that was followed, among others, by Blanquists, Anarchists and Narodniks.

Yet those who strive to distil the tragedy of a degenerating workers’ movement to a dichotomy of the flawless revolutionary Marx and social-democracy that has perverted his teachings are stopping halfway from the core of the matter.

The split between the faction of Marx and Engels and the faction of Willich and Schapper within the Communist League in 1850 had already signalled the end of unity between revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice that had been previously achieved through the admission of bourgeois intellectuals – Marx and Engels – into the League of the Just that was to become the Communist League. Following this split, the practice could undertake ventures while the theory could firmly embed itself among the tomes of British Museum’s library. Once it was isolated from revolutionary practice, theory itself ceased to be revolutionary.

The fate of the Barthelemy, a Blanquist, who, in the fervour of revolution, was as important as Marx and Engels, yet later died for nothing and fruitlessly, is described by A.I. Herzen in his autobiographical work, “My Past and Thoughts”, and illustrates an example of tragedy that practice with no theoretical compass can suffer.

Having withdrawn from the influence of unrefined proletarian communism, Marx and Engels found themselves drawn into the influence of British trade unionism. As a result, once the workers’ movement began recovering from the defeats of 1848–1849, the miscellaneous agglomeration of the First International set far less

lutionary process in Soviet Russia. It was aided by the composition of European communist parties, which consisted of an unstable mix of repenting reformists and honest but inexperienced revolutionaries, and turned them into a burden for the Bolsheviks rather than their helpers or guides. The rise of “socialism in one country” then signalled the end of the Communist International as a global revolutionary organisation, and the following rise of the Popular Fronts politics in 1935 was the final and irreversible transformation of the communist parties into the lethal enemies of the proletariat that served to restrain it for the benefit of the bourgeoisie.

Yet, in only one year, the 1936 Spanish revolution arrived. The Spain of 1936 closely resembled the Russia of 1917 in terms of its socio-economic conditions. The only difference was the dominance of Anarchism over Bolshevism, and the consequences of this were colossal.

Back in 1917, the Spanish bourgeois revolution regrettably stalled at its starting line. Later day Europe in 1936, with its rampant fascism and «Popular Fronts », drastically differed from Europe in 1917, but not all was lost and a successful proletarian revolution in Spain would have created a dramatically different timeline for Europe and the rest of the world. History balanced on the shoulders of the revolutionary party, the CNT-FAI.

At this point it appears that we are venturing into the reel of alternative history, but this is not entirely true. Had the Spanish Anarchists taken a different set of decisions, history would have taken a different turn. Yet due to well grounded objective factors, they were limited in their scope of possible decisions. This, of course, hardly relieves the Spanish Anarchists from the burden of historic responsibility. As a religious proverb postulates, “Sin must come into the world, but damn the one who conducts it!” thus demon-

his wishes came true for the first and last time in world history! The Russian bourgeois revolution rapidly transformed into a proletarian, even if not a socialist one. The party of Lenin achieved what the Conspiracy of the Equals never achieved.

The Russian proletariat could organise to seize power and neutralise the danger of counterrevolution. It could not, however, organise to transform society along collectivist lines. History shows that neither the artisan, nor the industrial proletariat was capable of such a transformation. The proletariat emerging out of the information revolution has yet to undertake this transformation, or the fate of the dinosaurs awaits humanity.

Thus the proletarian revolution in Russia suffered defeat, yet the bourgeois revolution was victorious. The impulse gained by the latter at the former's expense was of such that the backward agrarian country was propelled into the position of a superpower. Lenin, Trotsky, Spiridonova, Makhno, along with millions of workers, peasants, soldiers and marines that fought to stop the deadly chariot of capitalist progress, in practice only served to propel the chariot to a dazzling speed.

The wave of revolutions between 1917 and 1923 resurrected the old type of revolutionary communism. The shadows of armed revolution and proletarian dictatorship threatened the bourgeoisie at that time more than ever before. The first two congresses of the Communist International produced programmes that are a cornerstone of the workers' movement. At one point, surmounting the split between the workers' movement and unifying revolutionary Marxism with proletarian Anarchism even seemed possible.

The subsequent subsiding of the revolutionary wave caused the revolutionary movement to dissipate and disappear, and the Communist International to return to its previous social democratic positions. The latter process went hand in hand with the counterrevo-

clear objectives and imperatives than the Communist League or French Communist societies had in the 1830-1840s.

The antipathy that Marx and Engels felt towards the class of migrant apprentices, the characteristic pro-capitalist illusions of the founders of Marxism, legalism and pacifism flourished in the period that separated the Communist League from the First International. The result of the blandly moderate politics and the organisational diffuseness of the First International was mainly its total ineptness as a revolutionary organisation involved in real power struggle, and a total lack of physical aid to the struggling Parisian Communards.

This is how the situation was described by Jan Waclaw Machajsky, who was one of the few that attempted to construct a proletarian critique of Marxism, which bears immense value despite its many errors:

“At the time when the international workers' movement grew independently for a real manifestation of proletarian politics, the General Council of the First International was not able to conduct such a manifestation. The separatist Bakuninite movement thus emerged on these premises. It gained significant momentum after the Commune, which caught the International unaware and exposed its total ineptness at providing any kind of help. Had the International then committed itself to a single revolutionary step, the Bakuninite opposition would be left groundless.

“It is clear that Bakunin initially directed his anarchist preaching at the bourgeois radicals from the League of Peace and Freedom. It is equally clear that his alliance initially contained many non-proletarian elements. Irregardless, the phrase employed by the Hague Commission to discredit the separatists, and signed by Marx and Engels, the phrase that loudly proclaimed that this was an intrigue planned by the bourgeoisie with the intent of destroying the

International, was no more than a simple excuse to avoid an incredibly complex and insurmountable task. Of course, Marx could have easily ignored Bakunin's naïve programme that advocated destroying the state by decree on the first day of revolution, and an equally naïve theory that advocated constructing Socialism through the sole instrument of an innate human capacity of solidarity. But he certainly did not have the moral right to dismiss the protest of the tens of thousands of workers from the Romance countries, from Belgium and Holland that followed Bakunin. Its Anarchist leaders, of course, did not accurately represent the protest. It was not a protest against the centralisation that Marx allegedly replaced a vital federalism with. It was simply the protest against the centralism not being conducive to any kind of revolutionary content, and the protest emerged because it was perpetrated by revolutionaries, by "The Communists... practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others" (The Communist Manifesto)

(A. Volsky (J.W. Machajsky). Intellectual Worker. B.m. 1968 pp.86–87).

The Bakuninite factions of the First International were composed of ruined artisans and peasants who had revolted against advancing capitalism in the peripheral countries Italy and Spain, and also Russia, where Bakuninites had influence in the circles of narodniks during the early 1870s.

However, Bakuninite Anarchism was only second to the old French revolutionary proletarian communism in two respects: 1) It did not theoretically comprehend the necessity of power struggle and proletarian dictatorship, even if the demands of

to play in 1917. However, The left SR movement and the maximalists will soon receive a deserved mention.

Meanwhile, the internal contradictions of capitalism spilled into the fight between imperialist powers for global dominance in 1914. A prolonged 30 year long capitalist catastrophe was unleashed, and this was the age of wars and revolutions. As we now know, it was not capitalism's final death throes, but the painful transition from laissez-faire mode of accumulation to the state-capitalist mode. The objective conditions for a successful cycle of bourgeois revolutions in the East were in place, but the conditions for a global collectivist revolution certainly were not.

On August the 1, 1914, social democracy hardly crossed the line between classes, but merely openly admitted the class position it had occupied by it for a long time. It openly admitted its role as the party that upholds bourgeois control over the proletarian masses. Marxism was shattered, and its two essences quarrelled; the Communist Manifesto rebelled against the "Introduction to The Class Struggles in France."

Yet there was a fatal problem: the leftist tendencies of social democracy, despite their positive qualities, lacked the skills of power struggle after decades of civil peace and capitalist progress. They perceived revolution as propaganda about the future, and not as a current physical struggle. The history of Europe between 1917 and 1923 is long line of defeated and unfulfilled revolutions. The subjective inadequacy of leftist Marxists was a historical signal of the industrial proletariat's inability to conclude a victorious revolution.

However, the Russian situation greatly differed from Western Europe's. The Bolshevik party was standing on the fertile soil irrigated with the blood of revolutionary Narodniks, and spent long decades in preparation for a direct physical fight for power. The Russian worker was a first generation urbanised peasant that arrived at the factory from the village commune aspired to channel the imminent bourgeois revolution into a proletarian revolt, and

spite being more prominent than any leader of the left wing of German social democracy – from Rosa Luxembourg to Pannekoek.

Proletarian class protest against the bourgeois regime, and against social democracy tamed by the regime, found its expression in the perpetuated Anarchism and the emergent 20th century revolutionary Syndicalism. Despite all the virtues that can be rightfully attributed to these movements, and to the martyrs of proletarian Anarchism, it must be admitted that neither Anarchism, nor revolutionary Syndicalism became the signpost that could direct the proletariat onto the path towards its class dictatorship. Eventually, Anarchism remained the theory and practice of radical individual protest, and Syndicalism remained the theory and practiced of radical economic struggle.

All of the above applies only to Western Europe, where the cycle of bourgeois revolutions and the parallel early proletarian uprisings has concluded. In Eastern and Southern Europe, in Russia and in Spain, the conditions were different. Here, capitalist progress was lagging by at least half a century. The urgent imperatives were those of a bourgeois revolution, and the prevalent type of proletarian was a first generation urbanised peasant and a marginalised artisan. These factors produced multiple similarities between Russia and Spain of the early 20th century, and Western Europe of the Communist Manifesto era.

Social democracy was not prevalent in the workers' movement in either Russia or Spain due to their historic conditions. In Spain, the social democratic CNT was rivalled by the Anarchist CNT; in Russia, the Mensheviks were rivalled by the Bolsheviks, who were the closest to revolutionary Marxism of the 1840s. The Social Revolutionary movement in Russia, having shifted rightward after the 1905 revolution, failed to play the role it had the potential

real struggle pushed it into attempts of establishing proletarian power; 2) It did not theoretically comprehend the full importance of revolutionary organisation, even if, again, the realities of its political struggles forced it to conjure up such organisations.

In the end, the First International had split into the Marxist-social-democratic movement that lacked revolutionary content behind a composed party structure, and the Anarchist movement that lost all of its revolutionary impulses in the midst of chaos.

The only ones to remain free of both the Marxist-social-democratic parliamentary politicking and the apolitical Bakuninite Anarchism were the Blanquists, who achieved one of the most advanced examples of revolutionary thought in history. They proposed solving the crisis of the First International by turning it into a headquarters of the world revolution, but predictably did not find support neither from German social democracy nor from Hispano-Italian Anarchism, let alone from the British Trade Unions.

Yet the Blanquists had their faults too; for example, French patriotism and the underestimation of the workers' economic struggle. Moreover, the global picture started shifting in the opposite direction. Thus they failed in creating a headquarters of the world revolution, and in a few decades were themselves dissolved in the soup of French reformism.

The defeat of the Paris Commune was followed by more defeats of the revolutionary movement. The 1870s saw the failure of Anarchist revolts in the course of the Spanish revolution of 1868–1873, the misfortune of the Italian Anarchist revolts and the demise of the revolutionary narodniks in Russia. The latter limited their own aims, simultaneously radicalising the means of struggle by entering into a direct armed confrontation with the monarchy, thus

transforming their organisation from a party of social revolution into a party of radical bourgeois coup d'état.

The 1880s saw the defeat of the Chicago Anarchists in 1886, and the death of the Polish social revolutionary party called "Proletariat" – another example of ultra advanced revolutionary thought. This series of events signalled the end of the early proletarian revolutionary movement, and the beginning of the era of social democracy.

Korsch, when arguing in one of his works against mechanical determinism in equating theory and practice, correctly pointed out that the period of the most revolutionary German social democracy runs through the 1860s into the 1870s and also 1880s, whereby it was dominated by various petit-bourgeois theories and not Marxism. The acceptance of Marxism as a party ideology in the 1891 Erfurt programme was then a part of the general reformist transformation.

As the ideology of social democracy, Marxism had a double essence. One stemmed from its revolutionary past, from Babeuf and Blanqui, from 1793 and 1848, and also tapped into the hopes of a revolutionary future. The second was the real essence of the reformist present. A double personality is a symptom of schizophrenia, and this condition can last for a long time in a political body.

Bernstein's reformism did not create a new type of practice; it merely provided a theoretical draping for an already existing practice that was much more suitable for it than the content of the Communist Manifesto.

"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." "...we say to the workers: 'You will have to go through 15, 20, 50 years of civil wars and

national struggles not only to bring about a change in society but also to change yourselves, and prepare yourselves for the exercise of political power."

Among others, these words of Marx and Engels sounded like an absurd anachronism for social democratic parliamentarians, who had no intention of altering neither the existing conditions, nor themselves. The awesome shadows of Babeuf and Blanqui, of armed uprising, of dictatorship and terror tend to disturb the apparent calm of bourgeois society for the liberals and the police; therefore, let these shadows remain in the antiques museum!

The orthodox wing of the Second International that spoke against theoretical revisionism didn't differ greatly from it in practice. The orthodox radicalism was real only on words, and their revolution was in the realm of distant future, while their present activity was limited to progressive reform. The characteristic followers of theoretical radicalism were French Guedists and Bulgarian Tesnyaks, while its chief theorist was Plekhanov. Both the Guedists and Plekhanov capitulated to capitalism at the beginning of the imperialist war, while the Tesnyaks, having stood the trial of war, did not stand the trial of revolution and their dogmatism rendered them incapable to struggle for power. They thus slept through both Bulgarian revolutions of 1918 and of 1923, and then saw an inglorious demise.

Social democracy's leftist tendencies certainly struck a cord in Marxism's revolutionary essence, the same essence that was dismissed as rotten Blanquism by the revisionists. Yet leftist social democracy suffered from weakness, inadequacy and opportunism, and an organisational inability to struggle for power. For this it substituted a hope for proletarian spontaneity, as was indicated by its proponents' mortal fear of accusations of Blanquism – and this despite the respect that Marx and Engels harboured towards Blanqui (exceeded, perhaps, only by their respect for Chernyshevsky, whom he called the "leader of the proletarian party in France.") Even Lenin rejected the Mensheviks' accusations of Blanquism, de-